

DAISY HERSELF

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By

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DAISY HERSELF

CHAPTER I.

A TWO HUNDRED MILE DASH.

DAISY had run away from her home on the farm outside Toddburn village with this young store clerk, Beatty, who now sat holding her hand in the moonlight "flyer" of the M. & N. Beatty, who came originally from the city, was a bad young rascal; and Daisy—who, neglected and exposed to temptation since her earliest girlhood, had developed an innate awareness of "fellows"—knew it. None of her several reasons for this escapade had been the usual one—love. It suited her, however, to let Beatty think that she had come prepared to follow him to the world's end—a lengthy journey, upon which the railway ticket Beatty had bought for her was only good for the first two hundred miles.

Daisy was proceeding daringly, easily, without pause or regret, toward whatever lay in store for her along the path she had taken. Her locomotion was that of a thing which is both propelled and drawn. The propulsive force was her hatred of the farm where she had drudged for all the workable years of her seventeen under that plebeian

taskmaster, stolid, selfish John Nixon, her stepfather, and that unmaternal mother whose forename, by some perpetuated sarcasm, was Lovina. The drawing force was Daisy's own eager, vigorous, intrepid spirit of adventure—green maidenhood's hunger for the sensational new.

The car in which the two sat was not a "sleeper," but an ordinary red-upholstered day coach. The two had boarded the train at Oak Lake, the first station east of Toddburn (where neither of them were known by the new station agent) at a little after midnight. They were due to reach the city between six and seven o'clock in the morning.

Even if the car had been a berth coach, and there had been opportunity for retirement, Daisy could not have slept. The hour, the situation, the novelty of the rushing, lamplit train (she had never been on a train before), kept every faculty ablaze and awake in a pleasant intoxication of excitement. Elbow on window-sill and chin in palm, the girl sat, glancing now out at the flying moonlit telegraph posts, now about the interior of the dingy branch-line passenger coach. All seemed fairylike to her eyes habituated only to prairie fallow and lea.

Young Beatty, holding her hand and thrilling in a delightful though less spiritual than fleshly way, at the occasional glances with which Daisy baited

him, looked out of the corner of his eye at her and felt very much pleased, indeed, with himself. First, she had a glorious color, the like of which one could not buy for money, nor yet for love—a color that resided comely and rich in her cheeks, even at feeling's lowest tide, but which now, in the high tide of her adventure, overflowed down in a bonny estuary toward the milk-warm curve of her chin. Then, there were the features, each with its peculiar likability or lure—lips made and eager for enjoyment, yet with something in their set and pose that was constant and fine—a nose humorous and short, tiltable to every gradation of coquetry—eyes with dancing irises, soft baffling shadows, and brows that trended downward at the outer ends. Lastly, the hair—brown, with a wave that made it comely in any coiffure; coiled carelessly under a hasty pin or two at temple, crown, and white nape of neck where a curl caressed—had a piquaney even in its disarray. Beatty cuddled his head back against the red upholstery of the seat in luxurious contemplation, and again expressively squeezed the fingers he held.

Beatty himself was a slim, white-handed youth whose abundant blond hair and smooth “way” had made the world, for him, a kind of garden of the Hesperides—the fault with this simile being that he was no Hercules, except in his vanity. In

this, his strength was as the strength of ten, though not because his heart was pure. If you had taxed him with that characteristic in which Beatty was eminently taxable—his attitude toward girls — he would have regarded you indulgently a moment, and would then have explained that it was not his fault if “Janes fell for him” and “fooled with the band-wagon” to their own undoing. Surely it was a “free country.”

In spite, however, of the fact that the country was a free one, the special thing which had sent Beatty out of the city “for his health” was the quest after him by a two-hundred-pound brother of a sister some ninety pounds lighter. The brother, who carried a professional “haymaker in either mitt” for even those of his own gender who could use their fists with fair ability, was as sincere in his desire to interview Beatty as Beatty was considerate in his desire to save the brother the embarrassment of such an interview. A recently-received picture postcard from a friend of Beatty’s had, however, intimated that the family of which the brother and sister in question were members had since “gone to the coast,” and that Beatty’s home city had therefore become again for Beatty a consistent metropolis of a free country, if he wished to return to it.

Beatty did wish to return to it; and, returning with round and pretty Daisy Nixon as a travelling companion—made, Beatty felt assured, wholly and dependently his by the manner of her home-leaving—he felt that the several months of his exile had not been wasted.

“The boys”, so Beatty reflected complacently, as he leaned back on the car-cushion, “will cert’n’ee set up an ’take notice w’en they see this w’at I got here. They cert’n’ee will.”

CHAPTER II.

THE CITY SWALLOWS DAISY.

THE summer dawn came with a warm melting of the dark and a running out over the sky-floor of spilled light from under the edge of the world. Daisy, her nerves thrilling like the nerves of one drunken with wine, leaned untired on the varnished window-sill; looking, with all her young vitality gathered into shine of eyes and beat of heart, for her first view of the city.

The shadow of the express, as the early sun came up, coursed like a hound along the barrow-pits of the right-of-way, and quivered, as it were, in noiseless impact against the stolid cedar fence-posts that stood still and were whipped by in the guise of staring bumpkins as the smart, swift train hummed on its way.

Daisy saw these effects at the edge of her travel-picture out of the corner of her eye merely. Her attention was concentrated forward—forward, to watch for the first white trimming of roof-tops on the dewy green fabric of the prairie-rim. Hateful to her were the square fields by the track, where phlegmatic men and teams moved up and down the black fallow; hateful the whitewashed houses, the homely poplar-

clumps, the stacks of straw. Appurtenances, all, of the life with which she had been surfeited (she thought): reminding her of cows to be milked, of barnyard drudgery, of gawky, red-visaged, wholly unpliant boys, of men content to smoke and drawl away their rare hours of ease.

Hateful! The term is too mild to express the immense energy of the girl's distaste for the life she had, with youth's dash, pushed behind her in one reckless thrust.

She was done with it. For good or for ill, she was done with it all, or thought so, in these kinetic and dancing moments, as new leagues of her unexplored earth uprolled along the endless ribbon of this two-railed track of dreams. New leagues, yes—but, so far, no new scenery. The stations she had passed, and continued to pass, were nothing but an endless chain of Toddburns; the intervening reaches of farm land, no more than linked replicas without number or variation, of the Nixon farm. In spite of the "flyer" and its obvious achievement over distance, Daisy Nixon at moments had the odd sensation that the track was revolving beneath the car-wheels, treadmill-style, and the train merely standing maddeningly still amid the old locale.

But there—there! A quick hypodermic needle of joy pricked her throat, and Daisy caught her breath as the strong keen drug of excitement

tingled out to all her nerve-ends. A white kite-tail of houses seemed to drop down and flicker, half in the air, at the point where the uprolling earth revolved against the broad-open casement of the morning sky. Appearing for a moment as a fantasy, it soon settled into a lengthening white saw-blade of joined buildings, low in the distance, dividing the solid green world from the dreamy firmament of a June dawn. Straight toward it rushed the cleaving bullet of the train.

Her head out beneath the raised window-sash, her companion forgotten as though he had never existed, Daisy wrapped herself in the joy of the hour. The white house-line, advancing along the angle of its perspective, broadened and took form and character, split into rays of streets, discovered great chimneys with smoke-plumes, unveiled square buildings in a caparison of glittering windows, began to live and move and give forth human signs. The first workers were already in the streets, for a goose-herd of city whistles was croaking out seven, vying therein with the warning blast of the "flyer's" engine as, barely slackening speed, it rushed along the cobweb of tracks, arrogant and favored possessor, for the time being, of the right of way to the great urban station in the heart of all.

"Well, kid," said the voice of Beatty, "how d'ye like it?"

"Fine, Freddie," Daisy replied, blithely. The comment was plain and simple enough; but her eyes and cheeks told the rest, without need of words.

Beatty stuck on his hat, tilting it a little.

"It ain't so bad, either," he conceded, grinning to himself, as he picked up his smart leather suitcase and Daisy's battered telescope grip, "not so bad, at that, kiddo."

With a hollow, drumlike roar, the train drew to a halt beneath a dome of glass and iron; and Daisy and her companion, inching along behind the file of passengers, at length emerged upon a cement walk, walled in on either side by the bulk of varnished railway coaches. Passing along this, descending a stair with an iron balustrade, and proceeding through a great, busy, and echoing rotunda with a ceiling almost as far away as a sky, Daisy and her companion emerged upon a stretch of granolithic pavement.

Beyond the curb, a bevy of bus-drivers from city hotels crowed like a flock of roosters—the surmounting voice in this bedlam being that of a sandy-mustached old-timer, whose vehicle was labelled "Imperial Hotel." By his hind-wheel he stood, moving nothing but the hinges of his jaws; and to see his mouth open to its red limit was to be filled with consternation.

"Imm-Peary-ail Hoat'1!" he sang, his eyes looking nonchalantly up and away, with something of the expression he used to wear when scouting the sky for signs of rain, in the old farming days before he became poet laureate of the city's pioneer hotel.

"Why—look who's here, will you!" The exclamation was Beatty's, as he stopped alongside the scratched old bus. "This is him, Mrs. Beatty—old Jim-Jam Hogle. Can you take a passenger, J. J.?"

Mr. Hogle, without ceasing his vocal offices for so much as the fraction of a moment, let his eyes flicker down over Beatty with no sign of recognition, returned his gaze again to its former direction above the depot roof, and jerked his thumb casually toward the interior of his craft. Beatty handed the girl in, climbed in after her, and set down the suitcase and grip. No others entered; and presently Mr. Hogle, turning from his post by the wheel-rim and glancing inscrutably in at Daisy as he passed the glass panel behind where his two passengers sat, unsnapped and threw in his iron hitching-weight, climbed to his high seat, and rattled away.

Daisy Nixon had never before seen such crowds nor such coachmanship. With the horses trotting at a good speed, the old teamster wound in and out by motor-trucks, autos, street-cars,

horse-draws, and thronging pedestrians, as smoothly, swiftly and carelessly as though he had the whole street to himself. The traffic grew less dense as they passed out of the vicinity of the depot, crossed a corner where the car-tracks met at right angles, and, after bowling for a block or two down the city's main thoroughfare, turned down a side street and drew up at the door of a hoary frame hotel, its white-painted two-tier piazza weathered to a dingy gray.

Beatty and Daisy descended; and the old bus-driver, after first hitching the team to the weight, followed with the grips.

"You wait in the hall here, while I go an' dicker with the clerk, dear," said Beatty, ostentatiously, "I'll be right back."

Daisy, looking about her curiously, encountered suddenly the eye of Mr. Hogle, standing up the hall, out of sight of the hotel office. The eye had been trying for some moments to catch hers; and, now that it had succeeded, Mr. Hogle raised a huge forefinger, stained indelibly with harness-oil, and beckoned. Daisy went over briskly.

"*Missis* Beatty, hey?" said Mr. Hogle, toning his great voice to a low interrogative rumble.

Daisy nodded a careless affirmative. It was none of his business. She felt able to take care of this point herself, when the time should arrive.

"Like hell you are," said the unmincing Mr.

Hogle, "ner wun't be. Break away from him as soon's as you can—that's if it ain't too late already. I know *him*."

Daisy dimpled; raising her chin challengingly, after a manner she had. But she did not answer.

"I guess you're all right yet," said Mr. Hogle, after a shrewd fatherly glance, "an' I see you're one of them confident kind. Them's the ones that gets ketched easiest. Now you'll mind what I told you—won't you, Missie?"

Daisy, regarding her adviser with dancing eyes, bobbed her chin up and down in mock docility; and Mr. Hogle, shaking his head pessimistically, went out to put away his team.

"What was that old geezer saying?" said Beatty, coming out of the office as the old man went outside.

"I—I'm sure I don't know," said Daisy, gravely, "I think he was trying to make love to me, Freddie."

"Wants to get his can beat off, eh?" remarked Beatty, carelessly; "well, what-oh-what does my little girlie want worst, right now?"

"Breakfast," replied Daisy, plumply; ducking roguishly to avoid the caress her questioner, imagining *that* was the thing she "wanted worst," sought to bestow.

"A-all right," said Beatty, swallowing his pique; "we'll go and see if they can scare us up

some poached-two-on, right now. Then 'm going to take my baby out an' show her the best time *she* ever had, in all her young life—eh?"

"M'h'm," murmured Daisy, smiling to herself, as she followed her companion into the dining-room.

Breakfast that morning was a notable affair, a milestone in Daisy Nixon's days. Not because there was anything novel or striking about the garniture of the Imperial Hotel dining-room, which was a plain homely place, differing little from the eating-room of the Jubilee House in Toddburn—but because there hummed, and called, and clanged, and whistled through the open windows the multitudinous sounds of this new urban life into which she had, as it were, plunged headlong. Daisy listened absently to Beatty's chatter, conceding him an occasional dimple or smile; but otherwise almost forgot him until, as the meal ended, he laid his hand, hot and moist, over hers, and said:

"Well, how does my little-one feel about it now?"

Daisy glanced down at his white-pored hand, with its cigarette-yellowed finger-tips and outstanding blue veins. Then she looked up at him, and leaned one pretty cheek coaxingly close.

"You's baby feels ashamed in this old waist and skirt and hat," she said, softly; "ain't you go-

ing to get her some nice things to be married in?"

Beatty's hand squeezed hers.

"Your Freddie sure will do that for you," he said. "Let's go upstairs now, and figure out what we'll need."

Daisy suffered him to pull her out of her chair by the hand he held. Still retaining it, he led her out of the dining-room, along the hall, and up the stairway. At the top, she halted—fetching her companion, who had kept right on going, to a standstill with a jerk.

"Come on, come on," he said, making his tone matter-of-course, "the room is No. 19."

"What's the number of *my* room?" said Daisy, regarding him pleasantly but with a kind of odd under-gleam in her eyes.

"Y—your room!" Even Beatty, the inured, was embarrassed by that searching, direct look. "Why, I—I—darned if I remember the number."

Daisy continued to look at him a moment; then the shine in her eyes was succeeded by a twinkle, and this by a promising, coaxing side-glance.

"Well, then, let's go into the women's sitting-room, Freddie—this time."

Beatty knew when to yield a point—so he flattered himself.

"All right, Sweetest," he said, "you're the doctor—always."

They passed into the "ladies' parlor," which was empty, except for a few articles of faded furniture, among which a new red settee in one corner glowed with a preternatural brilliance. Beatty sat on the red settee and drew the girl down beside him.

"Somebody got a kiss for her Freddie?" he said, his lips loosely apart and wrinkles springing into view at the sides of his nostrils.

"Oh, I— do' know," Daisy dropped her head a little; "let's just talk. It's nice to sit together an' talk, when we love each other so, isn't it?"

Beatty's answer to this was to thrust his arm about her waist, push his palm beneath her chin, and pull up her face toward his. The girl resisted at first; then, with a motion of yielding, laid her head back on his shoulder and raised her lips. Beatty kissed her, not reverently but roughly; then kissed her again; then again and again: burying his mouth into hers. A little hand came up and caressed his neck; then slipped down within his coat and rested as it were, upon his heart—moving softly, as though feeling for its beats.

Then hand and girl and all tore suddenly and strongly away—and Daisy Nixon was upon her feet, her cheeks glowing like fire, laughing as she held up the leather purse she had taken from his pocket.

"It was the only way!" she cried, breathlessly and sparkingly, as he sat agape; "the only way to get out of you what you owe to me, for the things I have let you think about me, Mr. Fred Beatty. You thought I didn't know all about you—what you did to poor Pearlie Brodie, making her the talk of Toddburn, with worse to come yet—a poor motherless girl, who was given up by a decent fellow that would have married her, if it hadn't been for you. You thought I didn't know. Yes: you thought I 'fell for you', as you'd call it. But I'll tell you what I did, an' you can put it in your pipe an' smoke it, and I hope it'll do you good. I needed you. I needed to get away from that place where I was wasting my life, and I had no money—so I used you. I've met ginks like you before. I could see through you from the first like a pane of glass—you poor, miserable imitation of a man!

"Now, I'm going to take this money and use it, to keep me till I get a job somewhere. Then I'm going to pay it back. But not to you—don't you ever think it. I'm going to send it to Pearlie Brodie. She'll need it badly enough, in a few months from now. She'd never have got it from you straight—never in this world—so she'll get it through me. Now, you get out of here! I've wasted too much breath talking to you. And keep this in your memory-box: *I don't know you!* So

don't speak to me, if I ever have the bad luck to meet you again!"

The girl had barely finished speaking, when Beatty leaped at her, grabbing for the purse which she held. But she stepped quickly back—and, as he pressed in, gave him, with all the strength of her virile young body, a push that sent him sprawling.

"You give me that money," Beatty said, his face pasty and mean with fury, as he climbed to his feet and stood, slowly dusting off his clothes; "that's all I want out o' you. Hand it over, or I'll go down and phone for a constable, and have you taken to the police station.

"Yes—you will!" Daisy challenged. "I suppose you think no person around Toddburn ever reads the city papers and notices what the law does to a fellow that brings a girl sixteen years old to a hotel. Go down and phone for the police, if you feel like it! I know who they'll take back with them when they come, and it won't be me. And I'll tell you something more, Mr. Smart Man: If you're not out of here in the next three minutes or less, I'll phone for the constable. It makes me sick to look at you. I want to go and wash my mouth, too. It'll take a good many washings to make it feel as clean as it did before *you* touched it. Get away from here!"

"Well," Beatty growled, after a moment, as a distant step down the hall portended the coming of one of the hotel staff, probably attracted by the sound of the raised voices and scuffling, "keep the money, then, you blamed nickel's worth o' nothing. I'll get the worth of it out o' you some other way, yet—you watch me! There's goin' to come a time when you'll need me, an' you'd better fasten onto this," he took a card from his pocket and tossed it down on the settee. "Till then, I'll bid you 'good-day'."

Therewith—in his intense self-reverence, half-expecting to be called back before he reached the street-door—Mr. Frederick S. Beatty turned on his heel and stalked out.

But Daisy did not call him back. Neither, he it said, did she hasten to wash her mouth. As the slam of the door downstairs gave ostentatious notice of Beatty's exit, she moved to the window, watching him up the sidewalk with an odd, half-maternal look.

"That call-down may do you some good, Mr. Naughty man," she murmured; "you've had too easy a time with girls—that's what ails you, principally."

CHAPTER III.

THE MAID AND THE CLERK.

“ ‘U SBANDS are hodd duckies,” said a voice, accompanying the pat and shake of one of the cushions on the settee where Beatty and Daisy had been sitting. “So they har.”

The remark suggested experience, and contained an obvious invitation to confidences. Daisy, her eyes still thoughtful, turned and beheld a hectic sylph, with an insinuating expression and a feather-duster. Hair of an elusive hue was gathered into a cone at the back of her head. At the base of this cone, a piece of white cambric was pinned like a saddle. Frank lengths of mature, brown-stockinged leg, in contour like exclamation-marks, rushed upward, as it were, in hot pursuit of a skirt-hem which they did not succeed in overtaking until it had nearly reached the sylph's knee. She had a long chin, and lips that were pursed, not into a line, but into a kind of mincing rosette.

“Ar, ee—yes—s”, she pursued. The way she held her mouth made “yes” a hard word to get through that puckered aperture. She undulated like an ostrich-neck for a moment, then came to

attention, with her head on one side, and a hand primping cautiously at her coiffure. Her eyes had fixed themselves on Daisy's "ring-finger", innocent of any certifying circlet of gold.

"'Usbands *har* queer," she repeated; her glance, after a short sharp sketch of Daisy's figure, coming to rest on the girl's face, "arn't they?"

Daisy Nixon had knocked around quite a little in Toddburn district, and was familiar with most local types of both sexes; but the bearer of the feather-duster refused to be classified offhand in her mind. Cautiously, and with the feeling of one patting a strange dog, she responded:

"Are they?"

"Maybe, an' maybe not," said the other, enigmatically, "you carn't never say. Arsk them as knows." With this, the sylph transferred her glance from Daisy's face to Daisy's finger; then from finger to face; then back to finger; then back to face; and so on, ostentatiously, three or four times. Her cheeks, that, when she came into the room looked as though she had been running hard, gave still the same impression; though Daisy noticed that the rest of her face was a cool and floury white.

There came a ring, at this moment, from the telephone in the hall. Duster and all, Daisy's vis-a-vis, moving with a queer lateral toss of her hips

that made their obvious breadth more than ever noticeable, serpentine to answer the call. Returning after a moment, she said:

"Bob—er—Mr. Markey, 'e wants to see you, in the office. Straightaway, 'e says."

Wondering a little at this peremptory summons, Daisy went downstairs. She stepped a little diffidently across the dingy rotunda to the counter. There she found, leaning with an elbow on the edge of the register, a man slightly older than Beatty. He had a vest with do-funnys on the pockets; a coat broad-striped, snug at the waist, sharp-lapelled, and tight-shouldered. He had a face dappled with red. He was newly-barbered—shaved to the blood.

He did not turn broadside-on as Daisy drew near, but spoke to her from sidewise, sliding his glances out of the corner of his eye and his words out of the corner of his mouth:

"Got nothin' except hand-luggage, lady, huh?"

Daisy looked a little puzzled.

"Naw trunks, I mean," elucidated Mr. Markey, nasally; "get me?"

"N-no, there's no trunks; just the two grips."

"Just the *one* grip," corrected her catechist, dramatically, fetching up Daisy's old telescope-bag from under the counter; "just this—see?"

Daisy looked at it: Mr. Markey eyed her, tangentially.

"Ketch the point?" he said, after a moment, "we got no secur'tee for your board bill. You pay in advance—see?"

Remembering Beatty's purse, still in her possession, Daisy, a little flustered by Mr. Markey's abruptness, reached into the front of her blouse. The purse was still there, nestling against her waist-band; and, with a little thrill of self-congratulation at the initiative that had brought the pocket-book into her possession, Daisy drew it out, rested it on the counter, and made to slip off the elastic.

As she did this, she felt Markey's eyes on her, and saw him slowly pivot round. She got a gust of stale cigar-breath and a smell of bay rum as he leaned close.

"Where's the little weddin'-ring, honey?" he said, softly; "did Freddie forget? Naughtee, naugh-tee?" His hand, the finger-ends, like Beatty's, yellowed with cigarette-stains, came over, moist and disgusting, and paddled hers.

Daisy jerked her hands away, leaving Beatty's purse momentarily on the counter-edge. Markey coolly picked up the purse and slipped it into his pocket.

"Yoi, yoi!" he mocked, shrugging, with spread palms, "Freddie gets the little purse back, after all. 'Leave it to Brother Bobby', I says to him when he went out."

Leaning forward on his elbows, and continuing inanely to flap his palms—a performance in which Mr. Markey evidently imagined lay the very quintessence of humor—the hotel clerk grinned his relish into the face of Daisy Nixon. Then, suddenly changing his expression, he brought his fists down on the counter with a bang, thrust his chin out toward her, shot out an arm, with forefinger extended, in the direction of the door, and exclaimed:

“Now beat it! Beat it, before I call a cop!”

“Just half a minute”. The voice, with a thunderous under-purr of deep-lunged power, spoke up from behind Daisy. She turned—and looked into the keen old eyes, blue as a morning sky, of Jim Hogle, the bus-driver. His chin, with its sandy stubble, moved up and down within the sweeping triangle of his moustache, and the leathery muscles of his jaw rippled as he rolled his tobacco in his cheek.

“What’s amiss?” he said, taking Daisy’s two hands in his, in his paternal way.

“Hey, what’s the idea, what’s th’ idea?” the voice was that of Mr. Robert Markey; “who the hell told you to horn in?”

Old Man Hogle did not even look toward the speaker. “Did ye give yon other feller his walk-in’-ticket, like I told y’?” he enquired, of Daisy. His broad, team-curbing hand, the palm rough as

a nutmeg-grater, closed about her fingers with an unconscious strength of constriction that made the girl wince a little.

Daisy Nixon was thinking rapidly. She had been neither humbled nor daunted by Mr. Markey's attitude. In fact, the point uppermost in her mind, at the moment, was how to get back Beatty's purse—less because of its contents than for the reason that she did not want to let Markey score. However, there was no need of appearing too spunky, now that Mr. Hogle had appointed himself her ally. Daisy cast down her eyes, therefore, and merely answered the old man's query with a meek little affirmative nod.

"That's my girl!" said Old Man Hogle, approvingly, patting her on the side of the shoulder; "and now, what's the rumpus *here*? Has this lad been sassin' ye?"

Again Daisy bobbed her head without speaking. After a moment she added, contriving a little catch in her voice, "He took my purse, with all my money in it, so he did."

"Took your *what*?" roared her champion. Then he swung around toward Markey. "You give that up," he said, "and do it quick!"

"The blame little skirt lies," spit out Markey; "that purse belongs to Fred. She grabbed it off o' him. Anyway, it's none o' your business. You get to hell out o' here, and get your team out.

You got to meet that south train in fifteen minutes”.

Old Man Hogle, with great deliberation, pulled out an immense old silver watch, rubbed his thumb-ball over the crystal, and set the timepiece on the counter.

“An’ you,” he said, “have got to give this little gal’s purse up in fifteen seconds. If ye don’t—I’ll take a hand in it. Ye know what that means, Markey.”

Markey stared, his eyeball in the corner of his eye and his elbow bracing him laterally. Then he canted his head across the counter and slid an epithet out of the side of his mouth.

Old Jim Hogle did not even raise his eyes from the face of the watch. He waited till the second-hand had travelled one-quarter of the way around its dial. Then, in a leisurely way, he slipped the watch into his vest-pocket, glancing casually over Markey’s head at the keys hanging on the numbered rack behind the counter. Then—he sprang into action!

So swiftly, that the eye could scarcely follow the movement, his arm shot out, then jerked back toward him; bringing with it Markey, whom he had secured by the coat-collar. Taken so much by surprise that he was for the moment speechless, the clerk, helpless as a fish on a hook, was dragged by that one strong arm until he lay across the

counter. Then the ex-father and farmer who was now the driver of the omnibus of this Wheat-Land city's pioneer hotel, caught up from the chair where he had temporarily laid it down, a corrective device known in country circles as a "rawhide". Markey, recovering from his astonishment, jerked furiously about as he sprawled, scrabbling for some missile. Then, out of the corner of his eye, he saw the rawhide.

"Yeh touch me with that," he said, in his cat-like nasal snarl, "and I'll kill yeh."

"Hand over yon purse, then," said the old farmer; his calm iron grip holding the clerk to the counter without visible effort, in spite of the latter's wildest squirming. Markey felt the power of that arm and shoulder, nurtured healthily by the long, clean-living, open days of Plow-Land. It was as though he were pinned down by an oak beam. If Old Man Hogle chose to use the rawhide—

"Let me up, then!" he flamed, sweating with his struggles, "an' I'll give the jane her purse."

"You give it up now," directed Old Man Hogle "or, as sure as 'm standin' here, I'll tan ye with this rawhide till ye can't see. . . . An' ye can let up on the talk, too, whenever ye like," this in reference to the language which mingled with Markey's contortions, "or maybe ye'll get a crack or two anyway. Ain't ye ashamed, with the girl

standin' here—or have ye no shame *to* ye? Dry up, now!"

This last adjuration, accompanied by a shake which all but dislocated Markey's neck, decided that young man. His hand went to his breast-pocket. Into the middle of the floor the purse, flung down viciously, fell with a slap.

"Is that the right purse, Missie?" the old man said, shifting his grip a little as he glanced down at it.

Daisy nodded gratefully; a twinkle and a dimple in that side of her face which was turned toward Markey. The oaken hand came off the clerk's collar. He sprang up dishevelled, caught a heavy clerical ruler, black and round and thick, off the counter, and poised it as though aiming for a throw.

Daisy eyed this pantomime a little nervously; but Jim Hogle turned his back carelessly on Markey and missile.

"He'll not sling it," he said, "he knows better. He done that once before, an' we had a—a little argyment. They talk," the old man ran his palm up and down the rawhide and lapsed a moment into reflectiveness, "about dee-mocracy, an' every man bein' his own boss. Dee-mocracy's all right for a man when he's grew up; but *some* men never outgrows the tawse. If they'd judge a man less by how old he is than by the sense he's got, this

world would be ran better. . . Well, little gal, your eyes looks kind of heavy. Couldn't 'a had much sleep, coming in on that midnight local, without no sleepin' berths in it. Let's see, now."

He turned to the register and ran his finger down the page; then looked around.

"You skin up to Room No. 19, the one that Beatty lad hired for 'Mr. and Mrs. F. S. Beatty'. I'll see that ye ain't disturbed, while ye get y'r sleep out; then we can talk over what ye're a-goin to do. Now, Bob Markey," the old man glanced at the clock, "I'm goin' to get to hell out 'o this, like you said, an' meet that south train. And I'll be in plenty o' time, too."

With this, old Jim Hogle, taking his rawhide with him, passed off across the rotunda—the picture of health, from his great shoulders to the cat-like feet that moved as though yet in their pioneer moccasins—and made the ceiling ring with the mighty bass of his "last ca-a-all"—this being on the present morning a purely perfunctory office, as the rotunda of the Imperial Hotel was empty. Daisy—glad enough to do it, too, for her limbs were tottering under her with drowsiness—took the key Markey sullenly flung down on the counter, and went up to bed in Room No. 19.

CHAPTER IV.

A "STEER".

IT might have been about four o'clock in the afternoon when she awoke. Room No. 19 looked westward—not over green swells of grass and grazing cattle, and a wind swinging as a censer in the sky-temple, but over a hot gravelled roof, parapetted with brick and crossed by three radial clotheslines, upon which human garments jiggled grotesquely, like scissored paper men. The only jig-makers extant, these, on that busy midweek afternoon.

At one end of this low one-story level of roof, a brick rear-wall rose, with a row of doors that opened out upon those merry clothes-lines. Through one of these doors, as Daisy looked, came a young girl of about her own age. Plainly soon to become a mother, the girl's eyes had that mild, pondering look characteristic of her condition. She dragged over the gravel a basket of clothes; and, when she had reached an unoccupied part of one of the clotheslines, commenced to pin the washed things up — a mechanic's moleskin shirt, a cheap, print house-dress, a limp, lacy blouse, a little frilled dust-cap, and other little

sartorial coqueties that told their tale of a marriage less than a year old:

Daisy was taking her first look at "light house-keeping"; and, as she was new from the country, with all her distaste of fields and cows and "chores" uppermost, this back-roof prospect held her, as the new always holds. To her, it was not sordid, but sunny and cosy, with the wonderful city-sounds rising all about. She could almost have leaped across to the brick parapet, which was just below the level of her window; and for one gay adventurous moment, she came nearly doing it. She wanted to look in those doors; to see how people lived, in the city; to talk to the young urban housewife. She wanted to explore endlessly, to feed her boundless and exuberant youth's appetite of the eye.

A knock came at the door. Daisy felt a little anxious as she thought of old Jim Hogle. He had served her turn—secured her purse for her from Markey, toward whom she bore no grudge but felt instead a mischievous desire to "tame down" into a wooer—and she did not want any meddling, old, self-appointed foster-father handicapping her movements here in town. She must let the old man, who reminded her distastefully of the farm, know, once and for all, that her plans were "none of his business". Perhaps, though, he would not be put aside so easily. With this last thought in

her mind, it was a very cold and hostile face that Daisy presented, as she unlocked the door and opened it.

"Oh-h! Woo-oo!" exclaimed a voice, with a burlesque of shivering. The sylph of the blond coiffure skipped in, shrinking away playfully as she closed the door. "I say—you do chill one, you know!"

Daisy relaxed her face.

"I thought it was that old What's-his-name," she said.

"Ar, yes", the sylph had bobbed over, and was poking at her hair with a forefinger, canting and turning her head before the looking glass—trying, doubtless, to reduce her order to some semblance of Daisy's pretty disorder; "ar, yes—'e is a bit of an old nuisance, 'e is. You can't guess what 'e's up to now".

"What?" Daisy's eyes widened.

"Arskin' the boss to take you on 'ere, as a dinin'-room girl. The boss, 'e'll do it, too. 'Im and Jim-jam's old pals—'old-timers' they calls it, among the colownials—and the 'Ogle person 'e can have anythink 'e wants for the arskin'. D'you know, I shouldn't take it, if I were you".

"I'm not going to take it," said Daisy, with considerable fervor.

The sylph, pulling herself away at length from the glass, came over and sat down on the side of

the bed—dangling her high heels kittenishly and eyeing Daisy up and down.

“Do you know what I should do, if I were in your boots?” she said.

Daisy’s eyes came up interrogatively.

“I should go into service,” pursued the sylph; “like as not, you’ll ’ave a charnce at some rich young man, that way, sooner or later. ’Ousemaids have done that, by good management, even owver in the Old Country. Out ’ere, it’s a—a caution, ’ow often it happens”.

“I don’t want to marry anybody, rich or poor, just now”, said Daisy; “but how do you get into ‘service’, and what is it? What do you have to do?”

“Oh, down’t you know what service is?” her companion simulated surprise broadly; then, looking a little aside, as though addressing a third party, the sylph murmured: “Ow, the denseniss of the mahsses! It’s a cortion, it is!”

After this soliloquy, she faced Daisy again, looking the girl up and down as through the mistress’ lorgnette. “W’y”, she said, “domestic service, I mean—service: I carn’t use any other word—in some big ’ouse, with your two evenin’s off a week, if you’re a good bargainer, an’ a charnce to have your comp’ny in the kitchen, when the Missis isn’t abaout—she carn’t always be on ’and, can she?”

Daisy was so attracted—not by the “company”

aspect of the suggested vocation, as by the thought that she might not only view, but actually dwell in, some of the rich and romantic interiors she had seen in photoplays at Thompson's Hall in Toddburn, and perhaps have an adventure of her own in a "big 'ouse"—that she forgot to ask her companion the obvious question: why she herself was not 'in service'.

"I know a girl as is just leavin' her place," the sylph pursued; "I shall give you the address, if you wish, and phone her to be on the lookout, so you'll 'ave no trouble a-findin' the servants' entrance. 'Ave you a bit of pyper abaout you?"

Daisy fumbled in her telescope grip and brought out an old letter, from which she tore off the blank sheet. The sylph drew out of her coiffure a thin pencil that had been skewered there. In a leaning, long-lettered hand, she wrote a street name and number.

"There", she said, as she handed the scrap of paper to Daisy, "take a taxi—that's quickest, and it will save you arskin' your way. You'll do without references — the Missis in this place I'm sendin' you to is a bit of a soft un, and Annie will see to that paht of it. I say, I should nip out naow, if I were you," the sylph glanced at her wrist-watch, "while 'Ogle's away at the station, with 'is bus. 'E just left as I came up. I shan't tell him where you've gone."

Daisy, her heart dancing with the spirit of ad-

venture, went over to the looking-glass to do up her hair. After a glance into the mirror, she turned.

"I ought to have a clean blouse," she said; then in her spirit of blunt, brisk self-advantage, she added: "If you could lend me one, it would help, perhaps, to make sure I get the job."

The sylph's head came up with a snap.

"I shouldn't be surprised if it did 'elp," she fluted, "but I sharn't do it, just the same. W'y don't you arsk for the loan of my Sunday frock, and 'ave done with it? Arn't I helping you enough, as it is?"

Daisy, unabashed and with a little shrug, donned her slightly soiled waist and brushed the worst of the lint from her travel-wrinkled skirt. Then she picked up her telescope grip, and swung it gaily.

"Well, I'm off," was the verbal fashion of her parting, as she skipped down the stairs.

In spite of the sylph's assiduity of helpfulness, the latter made no particular demonstration of partiality as, from the head of the stairway, she watched the girl descend.

"Ee-yes," she murmured to herself, "they *would* put that saucy miss waitin' at table, in 'ere where my Bob is clerkin'. 'E's a bit rough at the start-off with the gels, Bob is—but 'e's dreadful soft-'artid when a gel once gets 'im gowing."

CHAPTER V.

A JOB.

DAISY NIXON flung out of the door of the Imperial Hotel into an afternoon world of dust and din and ecstasy. It was the hour when stenographers, in offices, whose high open windows command the streets with their emancipated pedestrians, begin to rubber over-shoulder at the clock, and to make excursions into wash-rooms to veneer the fresh color of cheek and chin and forehead with cadaverous conventional powder. The "boys" have been educated to look for this make-up (it takes an educated taste to appreciate it!) and a girl would as soon think of leaving the office in her stocking-feet, as without a blue-white effect on chin and nose and forehead, and a smudge of strangulation purple blotting the cheek's own inimitable rose.

Six o'clock would blow shortly from a hundred sirens; and the thrill of "quittin'-time" could already be discerned in the air. Down the street from the direction of the big transcontinental depot came a 'bus, three or four blocks away; and Daisy, with a habit of the countryside, identified this vehicle instantly by the team, whose markings she had instinctively remembered. It

was the Imperial Hotel rig, returning from the station. No time, therefore, was to be lost, if she was to evade her self-appointed guardian, old Jim Hogle.

A rank of jitneys was parked along the curb. Daisy approached a driver with a mop of black curly hair so abundant that it pushed his cap to one side. This driver half-turned his head in a formal "straight business, and don't waste my time" way; but the corners of mouth and eye twinkled companionably and humorously.

"Could you", Daisy's eyes twinkled back, too, in spite of her trace of country-girl diffidence, "could you—"

"I should say I *could*," the chauffeur's face was expressionless, but his accent was merry.

"Could you", Daisy dimpled as she went on, "take me to here—see?"

The young man hitched his chin forward in ostentatious scrutiny. Then, in a matter-of-course way, he took the scrap of paper from Daisy's fingers, brought it to his lips, handed it back, clicked open the tonneau door, and motioned inward with hospitable palm.

"Thank a-you," he said, elaborately, as Daisy stepped in; then, without opening the fore-door, he vaulted into his own seat. There was the usual preliminary roar, proceeding by staccato jet and pit-a-pat to smooth pulsing motion, as the

jitney glided out handily into the multifarious traffic of the street.

No river-ravine of Wheat-Land on a June Sunday had ever stirred Daisy Nixon to an atom of the ecstasy that champagned her as she sailed down that traffic-current between its Saguenay-banks of masonry, whose uneven summits, high above her, scissored the blue silk of the sky. Forward, upward to right, upward to left, the girl's glance travelled; then came down to the sidewalk, no square yard of which escaped for one clear moment from servitude to the thousand thousand tramping feet, following at a slower pace the drift of the traffic in the hundred-foot driving way.

No electric welcome blazed from the front of the city hall, with its coal-darkened brickwork and broad steps. No welcome, nor any sound but a mighty hammer-stroke from the tall clock, telling Daisy that Time was moving as well as she. No welcome—but Daisy Nixon felt that there could not help be a quickening of the city's pulse at the notability of this day, with its every moment so rare and thrilling to her.

The pulse of the motor throbbed as, coursing in the pack of its kind, it nosed from side to side or held a true-running swift pace astride a tram-rail. The chauffeur, with an air of profound abstraction made comical by his tilted cap and sportive half-presented profile, gave "her" spark or

"juice" as the occasion demanded, with a casual motion of his gloved thumb. At a corner where two broad streets met, the taxi-cab turned aside. Proceeding a little way down the second main artery of traffic, it rounded a corner under a brass-grilled jeweler's window and entered a labyrinth of side-streets in which Daisy soon lost her sense of direction so completely that the sun, after what seemed like an excursion into the little-visited due-north sector of the horizon, appeared to move around to the east, and forthwith to commence another day without pausing for the customary night-interval.

It was, therefore, according to Daisy's dial, about six-thirty in the morning instead of that hour p.m., when the jitney, doubling adroitly between two great gate-posts of gray masonry, spun along a paved driveway and pulled up before a house so big and ornamental and ostentatious that it filled Daisy with a kind of momentary awe just to look at it.

This structure would have filled an architect with awe, too, though not the same kind. Looking at the house upon which Sir Thomas Harrison had set the imprimatur of his taste and his predilections, the architect would, if he were a psychologist, have said that Sir Thomas had once been plain—very plain—Tom. He would have said that Sir Thomas loved the chief seats in

synagogues. He would have said that Sir Thomas loved to push and shove and crowd, and believed in the survival of the fittest—the fittest, that is to say, according to Sir Tom's standard. He would have said that Sir Thomas gave liberally to charities, for three reasons—for display, for business reasons, and to parade his dollars before the needy. He would have said that Sir Thomas loved advertisement, and paid high rates to have his "write-up" in "special supplements". He would have said that Sir Thomas, in regard to the policies or sentiments of the day, might always be found on the band-wagon—not because he always understood these policies and sentiments, but because the crowd clapped for 'em.

The architect would have said, further, that if he had had a sister and if she had been a pretty and irresolute girl and had chosen—we will say for the sake of present illustration—to go, as the sylph of the Imperial Hotel phrased it, "into service", he would have preferred to have her work almost anywhere else in town than at the house of Sir Thomas Harrison. This in spite of the deference and ostentatious politeness Sir Thomas—at state receptions and so forth, where he was well-watched—used toward the awkward and reticent woman he had married before he made his money—or rather, before the natural growth of the country made his money for him.

The architect might also have premised, from the heavily-built and solid cement bridge that was Sir Thomas Harrison's plan for bringing a rather pretty ravine up to the level of his driveway, as well as from a huge concrete garage and other indications of a superfluity of stone and mortar, that Sir Tom was a contractor and that the "Sir" end of his name—if it had not come by the political route, that is to say—had come through connection with the building of some railroad or government building or other public work by which, it had happened, the country had benefited while itself benefiting Sir Thomas Harrison.

Upon house and grounds, in short, was set the seal of dollars. Every dollar that would show. "Have more dollars than the next man, and let him know you have 'em," was Sir Thomas' social creed.

The chauffeur half-turned his head, and opened the door of the tonneau. Eye-corner and mouth-corner twinkled. Daisy jumped actively out, "telescope" grip in hand.

"Thank you", she said, and turned to go. In the country, one does not pay for a "lift" on one's way.

"One dollar, lady," came the voice of her driver. Daisy faced about. The features, as a whole, of the chauffeur held only polite formality; but eye-corner and mouth-corner still twinkled and twitched.

"What's that?" she said.

"Your fare—one dollar."

"Oh!" Daisy's hand went to the bosom of her blouse, slipped in—and was presently withdrawn, somewhat blankly. She had left the purse on the dresser at the hotel. No use going back now. A little shrug dismissed the matter. That was Daisy's way with vicissitudes.

"Nothin' doin', huh?" the chauffeur's voice was humorously sharp, "Well, don't start makin' excuses. It won't," the young man glanced up at the mighty and singular front of the Harrison house, "it won't be hard to find you, as long as you're at this place. I'll come back for it."

Daisy dimpled and turned off again.

"Say," commented the taxi-driver, "you better not go in th' front door." Daisy was walking straight up to the front steps.

"Excuse me for buttin' in," her adviser continued, "but the front door is only for the people that lives here, or their dolled-up guests. I'm only tellin' you for your own good. If you was to go up there and ring the front door bell, like you was headed to do, they'd know you was a green hand, see, and most likely you wouldn't get the job you're after."

Daisy hadn't told her conductor she was after any job. He seemed to have a way of knowing things. She put up her chin a little, and did not

look back, but thought it best to follow his advice. Without waiting to see whether she took it or not, he spun away down the other arm of the horse-shoe-shaped drive, on his return to the street.

Passing down a walk at the side of the house, Daisy saw a girl looking out through a latticed gate. Evidently the sylph had phoned her housemaid friend to be "on the lookout".

"I thort you were never a-comin', I did," said the housemaid, who was a thin, white, dissatisfied figure, with a larynx almost as prominent as the "Adam's-apple" of a lean man. Alice was one who had worn herself out with the effort, first to avoid doing any more than the barely necessary, and second, to do this as perfunctorily as she could—which was very perfunctorily. Daisy had expected, somehow, to find her just as she was—that is to say, homelier than the skittish sylph, because otherwise she could not have been a friend of the latter.

Brisking up to the girl, diplomatically sociable, Daisy said: "I came as soon's I could. It's a long way."

"Come in," said Alice, in her querulous voice. Daisy followed the present incumbent of the position that was to be hers, into the Harrison kitchen.

If it had not been furnished forth with such equipment as stamped it undeniably for what it was, Daisy, not having seen the other rooms in

the house and judging the room she saw by the simple standards of the farmhouses that were her only available criterion, would have taken it for the living-room. She would not, she felt, have minded living in it. It was great and clean and shining.

Alice, however, did not linger in the kitchen, which was not her domain but that of a tall damsel, whose tawny hair, long nose, long line of cheek, and lower lip pushed slightly outward by the pressure of strong white upper teeth, said "Edinbory" as plain as features could talk.

"Is yon the new chambermaid, Allie?" she enquired, stirring cake-batter with a powerful, brisk movement.

"Yes, yes," responded Alice, impatiently, "don't keep us now, Jean. I shall 'ave to be smart, you know, to have my things packed when 'E gets here." "'E" was Alice's "company", who worked for a transfer firm and had promised to "nip araound and shift her luggage" for her.

"Come awa doon an' have a bit crack, then, when ye can," said Jean, clearing her batter off the spoon by impacting the utensil cautiously against the edge of the bowl which contained the mixture. "We'll hae a canny morsel cake, an' a sup o' tea forbye", she added, as a clincher.

"You'll come too, Allie."

Daisy, who scented future advantage in an al-

liance with the hospitable Scotch cook, smiled back her assent as she passed on through a door at the further end of the kitchen. This gave to a stair carpeted neatly and leading up to a room with two beds in it. The furniture was expensive, but well-worn—evidently moved back to the servants' quarters to make room for the latest and newest guest-room equipment in the apartments the family occupied. Picture post-cards, handkerchief-holders, tidies on the chair-backs, a window-box with flowers, gave a jointly fresh and cosy effect to the room. To Daisy, after her loft at home, it seemed palatial.

"Who has the other bed?" said Daisy.

"Jean, o' course," said the disgruntled Alice, "'oo did you suppowse 'ad it?" She slumped down on the end of the bed opposite to where Daisy sat.

"I should 'a been aout o' here a week gorn," she harped. "I gave the Missis 'er notice, an' thought everything was owverwith. Then the Boss, 'e up an' says if I gow without there's a gel 'andy to take my place, I down't get no wagis. So I've stuck it aout. It's been a job, I can tell you."

"Is that so," absently commented Daisy, who had been looking around her with considerable interest, "well, well."

"It ain't the place I mind," said Alice, cau-

tiously, as the thought crossed her mind that Daisy was not yet formally engaged and might "back out", "but Jawge, my young man, 'e gets 'is meals at the Manor 'Aouse, an' 'e wants me where 'e can see me 'andy. But, come on, down't dordle so. Chuck your luggage under the bed or anyw'ere you please, whilst we go to see the Missis. . . Ar— 'alf a minit. Yeou do look a bit of a drab in that waist. Put on this one of mine till arfter we've seen the Missis. Mind and don't smudge it, faw you must give it back to me straightaway, as soon as she says she'll take you on. I shouldn't lend it you, only I want to make sure you're engaged, so I can be hoff to the Manor to my Jawge."

Daisy put on the flimsy but clean lawn blouse. It was fashioned loose and low in the neck, or she would never have made it meet; for Daisy was superbly "full" where Alice was flat.

"Yeou deou look a bit staout." Stout was not the word; but Alice was voicing envy, not admiration. "Come, now—we sharn't have any bother. She'll tieke you, straight off—I know she will."

Sir Thomas Harrison's wife was in the dining-room, setting the table for tea, as she always did on evenings when there were no guests expected. Daisy, after a little catch of her breath at the size and appointments of this room, turned her eyes upon her new mistress and felt an immediate

curious warming of the heart—curious, because Daisy usually faced strangers with an eye that danced with aggressiveness even while the cheek below it dimpled ingratiatingly: with speech that was chary, and with a capering confidence in her ability to “handle” any eventuality. Lady Harrison—without knowing it, however—disarmed Daisy Nixon at once with her mild brown eyes, her stooped housewifely shoulders, her mothering smile. Daisy felt that, some day soon, if she got and kept this situation, she would find herself talking to this woman more freely than she had ever talked to anyone in all her shrewd, guarded, combative sixteen and a half years.

Lady Harrison was diffident equally with anyone, servant-girl or marchioness. Her people, plain-spoken folk, had early hammered it home to her that she was all knuckles and thumbs. In these latter days, it was a pleasant habit of Sir Tom, in those moments when his self-complacency sat upon him most inspiringly, to stick his thumbs in the armholes of his vest, puff regardlessly into his wife's face the smoke from a plethoric cigar, and remind her of her good-fortune in “getting” him—a feat she, who had been awkward Martha Andrews, had performed quite passively, after Sir Thomas (then young Tom Harrison, paying for “private board” at the Andrews home) had tasted her apple pie and slept in a

bedroom she had "fixed up" for his accommodation. Probably if she had been less shy, she would not have been so good a home-maker. She would then have gone out with "the boys", as the other Andrews girls did, and left the pies and bedrooms to mother's attention.

"This is the new gel, ma'am," said Alice.

"Oh," said Lady Harrison, leaning her knuckles on the edge of the table and raising a wandering hand to the brooch at her throat, "that's very nice." This, the only social expression that had "stuck" in Lady Harrison's memory, was her sole verbal resource when locked in the besetting shyness that rose up and gripped her when she first faced a stranger.

"She'll start at once, ma'am," said Alice, not trying very arduously to conceal her impatience to be gone.

"Oh," said Lady Harrison again, fingering the brooch, "that's—very nice—very nice indeed."

"Well," said Alice, turning the doorknob as a preliminary to her exit, "I'll leave 'er along o' you, shall I, ma'am, an' go see to my packin'."

"A-a-yes," said Lady Harrison, "yes, do. That's—that's very nice—quite."

Alice backed out and clicked the door shut easily. She had not yet collected her wages, or she would have banged the door—as a parting sign that she was emancipated, and therefore free to be delightfully saucy and flopping.

Whether it was that Alice had, in some queer way, been the discordant note; or that the young woman and the middle-aged one, so oppositely natured and each possessing what the other lacked, flowed at once mentally to a comfortable, common level of distributed qualities; or whether it was that Daisy's comely and now double-dimpled pleasantness as she waited guardedly for the other to speak, just naturally made communications easy: it is certain that Lady Harrison's restraint, as soon as the door closed behind the sour-faced Alice, slipped away so easily and wholly that she herself was agreeably surprised. She pulled down her spectacles from her forehead and settled them across her nose. As she did this the mistress of the big Harrison house looked more homelike and motherly than ever. Daisy's warmth toward her increased proportionately.

"How do you do," said Lady Harrison, stepping largely and simply and rustlingly over, until Daisy, her chin up and irises glinting with a pleasant dancing watchfulness, stood right beneath the regard of the kind brown eyes. The mistress pointed her greeting by extending one of her large wandering hands.

"I'm quite well," Daisy smiled up as she gave the stock response.

"I think we'll sit down," said Lady Harrison, moving to where two chairs stood sociably together.

marks on original

"So you would like to work here?" she said, as Daisy sat plumply down, cupped her elbow in her palm, and tucked her hand, knuckles outward, beneath her chin.

"I guess so," said Daisy, looking around.

"Have you—have you references?"

"What?" said Daisy.

"A—references—letters from somebody for whom you have worked for," Lady Harrison, pressed by Sir Thomas to acquire social diction, occasionally used a preposition too many.

"I never worked in town," said Daisy, "but I—but I—," it was an effort for Daisy Nixon to add anything savoring of concession, "I will do as well as I can—for you."

"That's very nice." The social phrase slipped out by chance, this time, in its proper place. "but my hus—but Sir Thomas Harrison may require references. He generally does."

Daisy's face, in spite of her native trait of unconcern, fell a little. She had set her heart upon working in this lady's house.

"Never mind, though, dearie," said Lady Martha Harrison, quickly, as she noted the girl's look of disappointment; "Girls are not very easy to get, in town here, and I think, if you turn out real smart and handy—as I'm sure you will—that he—ur, that Sir Thomas—will give you a trial."

CHAPTER VI.

THE PLEBEIAN.

SIR THOMAS HARRISON sat at a mahogany roll-top desk, big enough and broad enough to accommodate a brace of men, even if both were as burly as he. His feet, stoutly and shinningly booted, were planted, toes pressing down and heels tilted up, in the soft pile of his office rug. A great, clean window behind him, edged with fairy spectra where the sun found a prism in the bevelling of the glass, flooded the office with light.

"Let a lit-tle sun-shine in," Sir Thomas had hummed, with apparent joviality, to the old hymn tune, as, a moment before, he had shot the window-blind noisily up to the top of the sash. There had, however, been an ominous note beneath his outwardly genial, toneless chant, as he had glanced through a challenging eye-corner at his secretary, who had previously tiptoed around and pulled down the shade to cut off the sun that was shining blindingly in his eyes where he sat typing.

"Don't be all night with that letter, Evans," said Sir Thomas, creaking his swivel chair in a way that made Evans—a nervous father of five, who sat up patiently until between 2 and 4 a.m.,

three nights a week, minding the youngsters, while his wife, who was young and skittish, "took in" all the dances—writhe in his seat; "show us some speed, ken't you, for once."

"Yes, sir," said Evans, who had only just finished taking dictation. He was a very rapid stenographer—he had to be, or he wouldn't have been long with Sir Thomas Harrison—and the keys of his machine, on its noise-deadening pad, pattered away like a rain-shower on a pane.

Sir Thomas Harrison squared his elbows before him and stared hard and embarrassingly at his clerk while the latter worked, until the concentration of his stare made Evans' eyelids flutter up and down nervously. This was Sir Thomas' way of exercising what he termed his "pur-rsonal power, sir".

"They ken't a one of 'em resist it," he was won't to recount, "no, sir, not a one of 'em. It gets 'em, every time."

In appearance, Sir Thomas Harrison was both tall and stout. His stoutness was concealed, however, by skilful tailoring; and the youthful lines given to his clothing, together with the way his coarse black hair was combed back from his forehead, made him look, to the casual eye at least, two decades younger than his fifty-two years. He had eyes like a bulldog; a little flat nose, blunt and crooked at the tip; a stiff, close-cropped mous-

tache; a mouth that blathered redly when he conversed; and a broad, rough-blue jowl. Beer had made his face pouchy, and barbers' cosmetics had given his skin the appearance of old canvas.

Evans finished the letter, whipped it out of his machine, stepped briskly over, and handed it to his employer. Sir Tom snatched it, thrust it cracklingly down on the blotter before him, and commenced to read. At the very first line, something met his disapproval; but he merely made a mental note of this, moulded his face into approving lines, and went on reading. He knew Evans, who was watching him a little anxiously, would conclude by his expression that the letter was all right, and would commence to put his things away and close up his desk to go home. Sir Thomas, in fact, protracted his reading of the letter, holding his pen poised as if to sign it, until Evans had his desk closed up and had reached up to the hook behind him for his hat.

Then the contractor let fly an exclamation, half-grunt, half-roar. He dashed his pen back and forth across the page in such a savage "X" that he broke the pen-nib off short.

"'R-r-rite 'er agen!" he bawled, "every blame word of 'er. What the blue blazes d'ye mean by stickin' in them periods whar I told yeh fur to put commas. And I said 'have went'. You got it 'have gone'. Didn't they learn y' no grammar at

th' school you went tuh? Take off that hat—'n git out y'r machine—'n r-rite 'r all over agen. Gettin' sore on y'r job, or what, Evans?"

"I'm sorry, sir," said Evans, hastily opening his desk and slipping a fresh letterhead into his typewriter; "I'll do it over again, right away."

"Oh-h—y' will, hey," Sir Thomas drawled in irony, as he got up, put on his gray motor-coat and smart cloth cap, and took a pleased look at himself in the mirror, "I thought maybe you was goin' to refuse for to do it, Evans. I guess yeh *will* do it over agen—an' ten times over agen, if I say so."

By the time coat and hat were donned and Sir Thomas had turned himself about several times before the looking-glass, the secretary had the letter re-written. Harrison, scarcely glancing at it—he was growing hungry, for it was 6.15—dipped a new pen in the ink-well, gave it a flick, and scrawled his signature, and glanced again in the mirror.

Evans nearly jumped over the typewriter desk at the burst of language that followed Sir Thomas' look into the mahogany-framed pier-glass. Across the bottom of the contractor's coat was a row of ink-dots, showing up disastrously on their gray background—the result of that pointless, swaggering, utterly expletive flick of the plebeian pen.

A few moments later, Sir Thomas' big smooth-gliding auto pulled up in front of Benwell's Dye House. Benwell's was the oldest-established dyeing and cleaning firm in the city. Out of the automobile, coat on arm, stepped the contractor himself. He was going to give himself another exhibition of his "pur-rsonal power."

In the dyer's office, he flopped the coat down on the counter, with what he deemed an impressive rattle of buttons, and crooked his finger beckoningly at Joseph Benwell, who was at the moment talking to another customer, further down the counter. Here came Harrison's first surprise: Benwell took not the slightest notice of Sir Thomas' summons until, after a moment, the prior customer went out. Then the dyer turned, adjusted his glasses, and, as though he had seen Sir Thomas Harrison for the first time that moment, came over briskly.

"Th' name is Harrison," said the contractor, gratingly, "I don't need to tell you that my time is worth money." He knit his brows, and fixed his bulldog eyes upon the face of the mild but steady-glancing Englishman who faced him across the counter.

"Yes, sir," said the dyer, as, with a business desire to placate a customer, he took up the coat quickly, turning it over with smooth, adroit tailors' fingers; "ah, ink-stains. Yes, sir, we can take

those out for you, and make a very good bit of work, too. A valuable coat sir—fine material.”

Sir Thomas Harrison straightened the arm that rested on the counter, lifted it, and pointed a blunt finger directly toward the coat.

“I want that tomarr’ mornin’,” he said, rolling out his voice with a stump orator’s cadence, “tomarr’ mornin’. First thing. See?”

“I’m sorry, sir,” said Benwell, quietly. “We couldn’t have it done before Wednesday—the day after to-morrow, that is. We are a bit behind this week, owing to press of work.”

“Press o’ work, nuthin’,” said Harrison, jerking his hand, “take a half an hour off, an’ fix that coat—to-marr’ mornin’. I’ll send around. Nine o’clock. See that you have it.” He turned to go.

“I regret,” said Benwell, still politely, “that we cannot break our fixed rule, made in fairness to all our customers, that all work must take its turn.”

“Well,” said Harrison, “you’ll break it this time.”

“We will not,” said Benwell, firmly. “That is the rule by which this house has built up its business. We have never broken it, and never shall. It was originally made purely in a spirit of business fairness and courtesy; but it has paid, as well.”

“Well,” Sir Thomas leaned hard on the

counter, and drove out the words, "it's a ba-ad rule"—the contractor said the "ba" part of the adjective with his mouth extended, red as a bull's, till the tongue was visible, flattened down within its crescent of big coarse white teeth—"a bad rule, I say, and it wun't pay you this time. I'll give this job to summun that's out fur business in th' proper way. Keen, see? On th' jump, see? Out fur th' old he-dollars—get me-e?"

"That is your prerogative, sir," said Benwell.

"An' I'll tell you somethin' more," the contractor, after moving away a step, returned to the counter and shook the coat in the air, "I live up on the Crescent. Yoe know that"—the contractor's head oscillated laterally, like a slowly-stirred punching-bag, while he gave this forth—"and yoe know that a bunch o' trade comes off o' that same Crescent street. You won't get none of it—none that I ken-ketch an' head off. Understand!"

Joseph Benwell, coming quietly around the end of the counter, opened the door leading to the street. Holding it open, he turned to Sir Thomas Harrison pleasantly.

"I am very sorry, sir," he said, "that we have been unable to serve you. Good evening."

Harrison, noisome with the gross perspiration of temper, brushed out.

"He's sure one daisy, ain't he." This from

Gary, the dyer's bookkeeper, whose shirt-sleeved elbow supported a slim torso that leaned above Benwell's ledger.

The proprietor stooped and picked up a vociferous tweed hat—not his—which had lain for some time unnoticed on the floor, beneath its hook.

"Sir Thomas," he said, in his mild and temperate way, as he dusted the hat off with his elbow and hung it up, "is a man who deserves great credit for his energy and push—even though sometimes that energy may be a bit misdirected. Never say uncomplimentary things, Gary—especially about one who has just paid us a distinct compliment by selecting us instead of one of our competitors to offer his bit of work to."

Sir Thomas Harrison, about to step into his automobile, paused cholericly at the sound of a voice which interposed, humbly but audibly, with the apparently irrelevant observation:

"Shoelaces, sir?"

The contractor swung about. A brown leather face looked up at him from across the sidewalk, where Jim McMunn, the pencil and shoestring man, stood on his two six-inch stumps of leg. Sir Thomas cast his overcoat across the back of the auto seat, thrust his square-palmed hand in his pocket, drew out a mighty roll of bills, and stripped one off. Thrusting the rest of the roll back in his pocket, Harrison held up the "greenback"

he had kept out. It was a double-width five hundred dollar note.

"Change it," he grated, his eyes glowing with the stir of the spite-devil jumping up and down inside him; "change it, an' it's yours, an' keep the shoelaces."

Jim McMunn eyed the bill imperturbably a moment. Then a slit appeared in the lower part of the leather face—a slit whose corners curled slowly upward as Jim, laying on the sidewalk his tray of shoelaces, pulled up the faded skirt of his coat and slipped one twisted hand, not into his pocket but inside his trousers, deep down to where the stout fabric was folded back and forth under the iron-shod pad that protected the end of his right leg-stump. When, after a moment, the hand returned into view, it held a money-roll not unlike Sir Thomas' own. The slit in Jim McMunn's countenance kept on curling upward at the ends as he laid on the end of the shoelace tray, one after another, four hundred-dollar bills, then nine tens, then a five and four ones; then, out of his vest-pocket ninety cents in silver; then, on top of all, a neatly coiled and knotted pair of shoelaces.

"Brah-vo!" came in leisurely comment from an unexpected quarter; "Harrison, old chappie, you lose, you know."

The contractor jerked about. Leaning across the automobile from the street-side, with gloved

hands resting on the tonneau door and cane hooked over one arm, stood no less a person than Sir William Ware, Baronet, man-about-town and sportsman, president of the Northern Bank and also of a certain exclusive club where Sir Thomas' application for membership was even now awaiting consideration.

Sir Thomas Harrison, whose idea of "having the laugh" on the shoelace man, in spite of the latter's unexpected display of financial strength, had been to call a policeman and give McMunn in charge for judicial investigation as to the source of his wealth, abruptly changed his cue.

"Y'bet," he jettied, gustily; "ya, y'bet. Laugh's on me—hey!" He crumpled the bill in his hand carelessly and tossed it toward its winner. As Mr. McMunn, in spite of his infirmity, very adroitly and gleefully caught the light, elusive paper ball, Harrison swung around upon the baronet and hooked the latter by the arm, tight as an anaconda.

"I got strict orders frum-th' Missis," he said, "~~for to bring you home to supper, one of these here nights.~~ Well, we'll just make to-night the night, hey? How about it, Bohunk?"

Sir William's features were composed. His eyes, blinking manfully, fought back a smile.

"Why, —er—," he set his cane on the ground, leaned on it a moment; looked away, mentally conning over his engagements for the evening;

then brought his face around with a gentlemanly look of polite elation; "I should be very delighted, d'you know. Most unexpected pleasure, Sir Thomas."

It was a rule of conduct with Ware to do, whenever possible, the thing he saw would give pleasure. He had met Harrison several times, and had tried hard to be sympathetically interested in him as a neighbor—but the baronet's mind was naturally of a speculative turn, and, in spite of his intention to be brotherly, he had to admit to himself that his interest in the contractor-knight had less of a human than an anthropological bearing. As now, he climbed bustlingly into Harrison's auto, Sir William tried hard to persuade himself that he was off to a pleasant neighborly dinner; but all the while he knew in his heart that the impelling motive was merely cold curiosity. He was anxious to see the beast in its native haunts—to note how it lived, and what it ate.

Harrison, getting in from the opposite side of car, bumped down, bulging like a balloon in his ostentation. As the automobile slid into motion, Sir Thomas glanced from side to side, watching closely among pedestrians and passing cars for prominent citizens, especially members of Sir William's club. When such an one, in response to Harrison's deliberate hail or a sharp, shrewd "toot" of the contractor's horn, glanced around,

Sir Thomas would bring his arm up in a flourishing salute. If the citizen were sufficiently notable and the street-din permitted, there would be a brief volley of social inanities from Harrison, engaging the notable citizen long enough to let the latter see Ware.

"A-ow, Mr. Archbishop," the contractor, for instance, would megaphone, through his curved palm, "what's th' good word?"

And Archbishop Markham, a man of long social experience, would roar back humorously, though with no more than a passing glance, "A-ow! A-ow!"

Sir William, sitting back with his cane between his knees, was too deep in amused contemplation to note the capital that was being made of his presence in Harrison's vigorously-snorting, frequently-tooting car as it progressed down Main Street. The contractor's guest was, in fact, engaged in practising the pronunciation of a certain word he had, after entering the auto, jotted down phonetically in a little leather-covered note-book. When he would get it right, or as nearly right as possible, Sir William would chuckle and slap his leg in immense enjoyment. The word was "Bohunk."

CHAPTER VII.

A HUMAN HORTICULTURIST.

“**H**ERE is Sir Thomas,” said Lady Harrison, rising a little nervously from the chair by Daisy’s in the dining-room, as she saw through the window, the long black car glide up the drive; “now, I think you’ll do very well, dearie. Just follow Jean’s instructions when you’re bringing the things into the dining-room. You’ll have to wait on the table to-night, you see, since Alice has left us.”

“Dinna fash yersel, lassie,” said Jean, as she filled the soup-tureen—watching Daisy with some amusement as the latter, anxious to please her mistress—the first disinterestedly kind person she had met in this bumping, jostling, crowding, yet delightful city of her great adventure—kept tiptoeing over to the swinging door, pushing it cautiously a bit open, and peering through into the dining-room; “ye needna keek through the crack o’ the door. I can tell by the voices when they’re set doon. There—listen!”

Voices that had been mixed and muffled in the distant drawing-room swelled into sudden distinctness, as a door opened. The creak of boots dried by the sun of the street was smothered in

soft carpeting as the tide of footfalls flowed about the island table in the big dining-room. A chair squeaked with the weight of a heavy figure sitting down. The feet shuffled to silence. A silk kerchief whistled out of a pocket, and a nose blew like the six o'clock siren of a flour-mill.

"There, then, new gel," said Alice, coming into the room at the moment with her hat pinned on, exhaling the cologne of her recent titivation; "look sharp now. Serve the soup while 'e's a-blowin' 'is nose. 'E'll 'oller like a wild bull if it ain't on the table the minit 'e gets 'is face clear o' his 'andkcher. Prècious little-excuse 'e needs to mieke an upraw, 'e down't."

Hastened by this exhortation from one who evidently knew whereof she spoke, Daisy, her color risen to a fine bloom in her excitement, passed through the swinging door which ~~she~~ flattened back out of sight, held open for her, and bore to the side-table the tray with the covered soup-tureen and warm plates.

"Hey—bounce along here, English." Harrison, whose back was toward her, crammed his silk handkerchief, after a persistent habit of his earlier coatless and manual days, into his hip-pocket, and spoke as to Alice; "what do we pay you for?"

Daisy felt every nerve in her body recoil aggressively at his tone; but, in response to a rather helpless glance from the big woman sitting

awkwardly at the other end of the table, she came over rapidly with the soup-dish.

There was a certain habitual jerk around and quelling stare upward—his “pur-rsonal power” must be kept active—which Sir Thomas always delivered when the maid reached his chair. Alice, who had been a maid of many employers, whose eccentricities she had made a point of humoring, had early noted this gesture of Harrison’s, and had always made a point of pausing two or three feet away until the observance was over, to avoid possibility of accident to the dish she bore. But Daisy, hurrying to the table, was caught unprepared, right at Harrison’s side. His jerking shoulder hit the bottom of the soup-tureen. It fell, and with it a Niagara of hot soup poured down Sir Thomas’ arm and shoulder and into his lap. This happened before he had time to follow the twist around with the usual glare upward.

A delightful feeling of unloosed anger flowed over the contractor. Here at least was an excuse to “call down” the wary Alice. Sweeping the greasy surplus from vest and trousers with a scrape or two of the side of his napkin, Harrison gathered up his blue jowl, narrowed his eyes, knitted his forehead, and wrenched his head around to bellow. Then he saw, not the white-lashed, thin-nosed Alice, but Daisy, flushing and

dimpling irrepressibly as she bent to pick up the soup-tureen.

What Harrison had intended to say was something like this: "Blast your sun-kissed English hide, you'll pay for this mess. An' then I'll fire you. . . ." etc., etc.—making each sentence hurt as much as possible, according to his knowledge of Alice's sensibilities.

What Sir Thomas Harrison actually did say, after a brief stare at the new maid, was this: "Pretty good for a start-off, little one. Pret-ty good!"

And Daisy, kneeling over the upturned dish, her face below the edge of the table and invisible from the lady and the guest, tipped her head a little to one side and twinkled up at her employer out of the corner of her eye. His face changed ever so little—just a slight lowering of the eyelids and a quiver outward of the thick lower lip—but enough to let Daisy know that she would have no more trouble with Sir Thomas Harrison except that peculiar kind of trouble she knew well how to deal with—that kind of trouble which made life, for pretty and piquant Daisy Nixon, a continuous chain of daring adventures.

Sir William Ware was a stroller, with hands in pockets, on the veranda of the world. It is true that he was a bank president; but the position,

even more honorary than bank presidencies usually are, gave him as little work or concern as his several other business connections of the same kind. Agents did the worrying; Sir William merely spent the money, or as much of it as a bachelor of quiet tastes required. A large unused portion of his income was reinvested each year. The principal thus grew instead of shrank; and Sir William, as he put it, had long ago "quite given up hope of ever being able to die a pauper."

Sir William had a large library, but seldom read books. He reserved his seats seasonally at the theatre, but seldom attended shows. Life itself was the novel he read and the drama he watched. A man who has those two things most people want most—money, and social prestige and power—and has remained so far unspoiled by having them, that he knows keenly and wisely wherein they are valuable and wherein worthless: such a man is apt to develop a humorous contempt for the book and drama as interpreters of life, when he compares chapter or act with his experience of the real thing.

Ware had the highest social status, both by birth—which counts for little in the West—and by innate qualification, which counts everywhere in desirable circles. A patrician, innately so in the sense of being a gentleman as well as a thoroughbred, is seldom spoiled by being born wealthy. Sir

William, who had enjoyed but never either mis-used or wasted his money; and who, welcomed in any social circle, was yet a friend of man everywhere, would have liked, if it had been possible, to have helped everybody to enjoyment of the same things he enjoyed. He wanted to see everybody with "a guinea he could spend." He wanted to see everybody a friend to everybody else.

Although the women, both young and old, in the circles where Ware moved had demonstrated to themselves, by trying every rivet in his celibate harness, that as far as they were concerned he was an immovable, immutable and foreordained bachelor, it was an odd fact that he had never in his own mind given up either the intention or the hope that there would some day be a Lady Ware—the kind he wanted.

These were a few of the qualities the future Lady Ware must have: Physically, she must be perfect, and of vigorous health. She must have an instinctive sophistication: an innocent girl would be flavorless. She must be frank, but not rude. She must be perennially alive and merry. She must, above all, be new material—that is, young enough not to be hardened against impress.

In his quest for a wife—or rather, in his unsuspected but ever-present matrimonial vigilance—Sir William had followed a course exactly opposite to the usual one. That is to say, instead of

mark on original

seeking out some woman or maiden of his circle who seemed outwardly qualified, and then analyzing her under the microscope of a long and intimate acquaintance, he first thought up the qualities he wished his future wife to possess, and then synthesized them into an imaginary Eve who abode always in his brain and was the pattern, vague, perhaps, as to actual form and feature, but palpable enough in all essentials, of the female Sir William Ware proposed to discover and marry.

When he found her, there would be no "shilly-shallying." There never had been, when a Ware found anything he particularly wanted. He would marry her "straightaway." Sir William could conceive of no obstacle. The chance that Fate would play him the trick of showing him his ideal in another man's wife was, he decided, too remote to be considered.

Some two hours after Daisy's appearance in the Harrison dining-room, Jean the Scotch cook, drinking tea with Daisy in the kitchen, reached out and opened the door in answer to a knock like a steam-hammer. In the doorway stood a small, shrewd-faced, grinning boy.

"Some guy out under them trees at the gate," he said, "wants 'a have a word', as he calls it,

wit' that jane," indicating Daisy with a jerk of his head.

"And how d'ye ken he didna mean me?" Jean enquired, drawing in her chin and making a mouth at the messenger.

"Cos he said a 'young, good-lookin' one'," replied the youth, ingenuously; evading adroitly, however, Jean's muscular red hand as it swung in his direction.

"Sauce-box! Ye'll just keep the len'th o' my arm away, if ye're canny, after a rap like that. Skedaddle!"

The courier skedaddled. Jean closed the door and returned to the cosy table, with its cake-plate, tea-pot under cosy, cups and saucers, and sugar-dish. Daisy stood up before the looking-glass and gave her hair a little poke with her forefinger and thumb.

"Sit ye doon, lassie," Jean advised, as she stirred her tea, "let the mon come awa in, if he wants to court ye. I'm off tae my bed, richt this minute, and ye'll have the place to yersel's."

"Oh-h, I guess 'll just go and see," Daisy's eyes sparkled with resource and daring; "if it's somebody I know, I'll tell him to come earlier next time, and send him off home."

"And if it's a'budy ye dinna ken," Jean said, squaring a great forearm on the table, "juist skirl. I'll bide here, with the outside door no

snibbit, an' listen for a wee, in case ye need me."

Daisy's feet made a light brisk tapping on the contractor's cement driveway as she stepped smartly down toward the gate. Behind her, the big house was gradually darkening to retiring-time. Before her were great maples, with mysterious darkness between — thickening into a group with dark undergrowth at the point where the two stone gateposts marked the junction of driveway and street.

Three persons were in Daisy's mind. First, Beatty—although how he had found out her whereabouts was a puzzle. Second, old Jim Hogle of the Imperial Hotel—for the sylph, whose impulse of meanness Daisy had estimated as strong enough to over-balance self-consideration any day, might easily have played her false and told Hogle where she was. Third, the chauffeur of the jitney, perhaps come back, on the excuse of calling for his fare, to ask her to go out for a "car-ride."

Daisy found herself, in fact, hoping that the tarrier under the trees might be one of the three, although her reason for wanting to see each was different. She hoped it was Beatty, for his taking the trouble to trace her would show that he cared, which it would be a satisfaction to know. She hoped it was old Hogle, in order that she might have the chance to tell him, "plump and plain"

and finally, that she was quite capable of looking after herself, and to mind his own business. She hoped it might be the chauffeur, because there had been something about that curly head and humorous eye, as well as in his friendly warning about entering the Harrison house "the back way", that suggested he might develop on acquaintance into very good "company." To Daisy, men were of only two classes—those who were "forward" and "had fun in them," and those who were backward and hadn't. She preferred "forward" to "backward" men: first, because curbing a man was "more sport" to a girl of Daisy's merry intrepidity than having to encourage him; and secondly, because backward men usually "went crazy" when once you got them started, and could not be handled at all.

She was therefore a little surprised and puzzled, but agreeably so—for the new was always agreeable to Daisy, who had been from her cradle shaped for adventure—when there stepped out from under the foliage a tall, gentlemanly man with a cane, who lifted his hat and said "Good evening"—not awkwardly but with a certain smooth ease. His face and hers were in the shadow of the gatepost; but there seemed something faintly familiar about his voice.

"Shall we go out where it's light, and take a look at each other?" he said.

Daisy, withholding speech—she had found out by experience that it was a good rule to let the other, when a stranger, do all the talking for the first few moments—let her companion precede her through the gate.

In the full light of the street-lamp he stopped, turned, rested his cane on the pavement, and looked down at her as she came out from behind the big stone post. Daisy, with a heightening of her surprise, yet with a certain familiar thrill she could not quite explain, looked up into the pleasant eyes of Harrison's guest.

She saw a man whose appearance, in every last detail, mutely vocalized that elusive and often misapplied term "gentleman"—his quiet clothes, worn unconsciously as an outward cuticle; not a muscle at constraint, either in his clean-cut friendly face or his easily-standing figure—because self had been wholly forgotten and his interest, by the polite habit of years of breeding, transferred spontaneously and with pleasant solicitude to his companion. His hair, in which a hue of gray showed, was cut sensibly and short. Although hair and skin proclaimed him an elderly man, there was about him a general air of frankness, of enthusiasm, of almost boyish eagerness, that made Daisy "take to" him in a companionable sense, at once.

Ware, on his part, saw a girl, bright and dimp-

ling, perusing him with eyes that coruscated with sophistication and wariness—armed cap-a-pie in every virile nerve and muscle—not a bit timorous, but flashingly on guard, with every faculty at its sentry-post. He saw a girl whose lashes twinkled irrepressibly, and whose lips had to be pressed hard against the smile-impulse. He saw a girl, whose regal color and roundness and poise, and clear eyes and skin were a proclamation of health and vigor that he who ran might read. He saw a girl whom many little uncouthnesses of manner and attire showed “green” and undeveloped—in short, susceptible of tillage as a bit of wild but fertile garden-ground.

“I’m going to marry you, you know,” he said, quietly, with no more preface than the friendliest of all smiles.

There! It was out—said as Sir William had long ago decided he would say it—without preamble, smoothly, quietly, as though it were a thing that had been arranged ages ago, and he were simply reminding her of it.

Ware watched the girl’s face with keen curiosity—his glance steady, but so pleasant withal, that Daisy did not find it disconcerting. The girl looked back at him—her face first shortening and dimpling to a half-smile; then lengthening to sobriety; then gathering and dimpling again, and remaining so, because that was Daisy Nixon’s

natural expression. Daisy knew nothing about hypnotic suggestion. All she knew was that she seemed surrounded by some queer influence. She seemed—to put it the way it presented itself to her—as though she had stepped into a book or a moving-picture or a dream.

Sir William stepped to her side, crooked his arm, drew hers through it.

“Shall we have a cup of coffee, somewhere?” he said; adding in droll answer to his own invitation, “Yes, we shall, shan’t we, my dear?”

Daisy, feeling as though she had temporarily become twins—one twin going along quite naturally and unquestioningly by this queer stranger’s side, and the other, agog with merry curiosity, following along to see how the adventure was going to turn out—was conscious of a short walk under the city’s arc-lights, an entry into a cafe on the ground floor of a great and handsome apartment-block, a side-turn into a curtained alcove, and a half involuntary sitting-down into a chair pushed adroitly behind her by a waiter in full dress and with an uncanny plaster-cast face. A table, with linen, shining silver, and cut-glass was between the quiescent twin of her queer dual self and her companion. The other twin of her, seemed to stand a bit aside, twinkling and vigilant.

Sir William, without looking at the menu the

waiter held before him, gave a brisk order. As the attendant moved smoothly and quickly away, Ware filled two of the shining glasses in the centre of the table with ice-water, clinked them together, and passed one to Daisy.

"To Lady Ware," he said, gravely and pleasantly, as he drank. Daisy—at least that twin half of her who companioned the baronet at the table—seemed to know exactly what to do. She lifted her glass and sipped, tipping her little-finger up. Then her two halves merged into one a moment, and the whole Daisy said:

"Who's Lady Ware?"

Her companion, whose name she did not yet know, looked across at her with a kind of pondering exaltation—a deep but self-contained joy.

"She's one who has been a long time arriving," he said, "a long, long time, my dear. But she's here at last."

"You're an Englishman, aren't you?" Daisy plumped, naively.

"Guilty, on all counts," Sir William smiled, "but I think we shall manage to live that down, shan't we. I'm sure we can do so, if we both try hard, and try together."

"Well—Englishmen are gentlemen, anyway," Daisy conceded, drinking some more water. "I'd trust myself anywhere with an Englishman."

"Do you know, now," Sir William reached out

a strong white hand and put it over hers, looking right at her in a pleased and virile way, "I am infinitely rejoiced to hear you say that—infinity rejoiced. The way you said it, too! My word!"

His air, though Daisy at the moment could not see it that way, was the air of a man who has acquired a new pet; and, planning to train it, is surprised to find that it knows some tricks already.

"What's your name?" said Daisy.

Sir William felt ready to hug himself every time this conjugal find of his spoke. He could have danced every time she changed expression. Absolutely novel! New clay to the potter's hand!

"I am called Ware," he said, "so," Sir William had a momentary lapse, common both to more and to less intelligent men than he, "you will have to learn to be-Ware, you see."

The waiter of the plaster-cast face, holding on high a tray which he brought down with a deft flourish to the level of the table, slipped in like a whisper. There was a noiseless flicker of fingers and napery and silver—and he had vanished through the curtains again. There was left a neatly-laid table, on which Daisy saw a silver dish containing oranges, bananas, grapes and now luscious dates; a plate of cake cut thin; a coffee-pot steaming aromatically; and a side-dish with toothsome little cubes of cheese.

Ware, watching with a delight that increased each moment, saw Daisy, with a womanly and homelike little motion, reach out quite as a matter of course, pull the coffee-pot toward her, set the two cups in their saucers, with spoons beside, and look around for the cream.

"Cafe noir," said Sir William; "let's try it black, this time. If you don't like it, we'll have in some cream."

Daisy Nixon filled the cups, passed one to her companion, and, gingerly lifting to her lips the one she had retained, tasted it.

"Ugh! it's like medicine," she said; "tell the man to bring some cre-*eam*, quick."

Sir William Ware was so elated at the smooth and rapid development of his unique mating experiment that he could have shouted with glee. It was barely twenty-five minutes since he had first linked arms with this tip-top bit of girlhood and led her in out of the street. Now she was passing his coffee unprompted. Next, ordering him to have in the cream. If domestic relations continued to grow in this splendid, almost spontaneous manner, she would be jolly well ready for the marriage ceremony, almost, by the time this bit of a supper was over. And, if *she* was ready, Jove! he would be, too. It was magic, it was ripping, the way in which his synthesized connubial Galatea had taken upon herself the bloom and

body of life! The baronet sat back, his napkin on his knee, contemplating Daisy with an enjoyment more keen than any sensation he could remember in all the conscious years of his half-century and more.

"Shall you like to be Lady Ware?" he said, almost deferentially.

Daisy took a date-stone from her red lips, laid it on the side of her saucer, and leaned forward, knuckles under chin, dimples dancing in and out, eyes flashing with a kind of bright shrewdness.

"I don't know," she said; letting her lashes fall slowly, and putting her head a little on one side.

"I say—stop it!" observed Sir William, so briskly that Daisy sat bolt upright, sobered for a moment; "don't do that, you know—don't flirt, please. I'm not joking. Did you think I was joking, really?"

"Joking about what?" said Daisy, in her direct way; but her eyes twinkled.

"You know jolly well what, you tantalizing little beggar," said Sir William. "Now, do be sensible. Pour me out a drop more coffee, won't you?"

Daisy's round arm and elbow tipped up piquantly as she filled the proffered cup.

"I say, I do like to see you pour coffee, you know," Ware's eyes shone like a boy's as he leaned over and, for the second time that evening,

covered her hand with his. "Now, tell me, won't you, what you think about our—our plan, as it were?"

The hand on hers was strong and cool and steady as a rock. Something about the fine clean touch of it caused coquettishness to fall from Daisy like a flimsy wrap cast aside. She looked at her companion with brown eyes into which there had come a high shining of frankness and trust. The baronet received the honest beaming of that look, in which Daisy's self spoke, with a sense of satisfaction almost solemn in its profundity.

Daisy cleared her throat a little—a habit she had when about to speak seriously. Then utterance came, in the simple and plain provincialism of the western farm country.

"You seem to be in earnest about this marrying idea; and I'd trust you anywhere," she began; then paused, pondering, her free hand propped beneath her chin.

"I say, that's very jolly of you, you know," Sir William patted the hand under his.

"I'd trust you anywhere," Daisy went on, "and there isn't any reason, I guess, why I shouldn't marry you. I'm not promised to anybody else, and I like all the boys the same—just as friends. I suppose you're a pretty rich man, and I'd have a lovely home; and you're so polite and gentlemanly, you'd be an easy husband to get along

with. But—but when a person marries,” Daisy hesitated, a dash of color coming into her cheeks; then, putting up her chin, went on resolutely, “they have to—have to—oh, I can’t put it in any fancy way, because I don’t know how—they have to start right away raising kids. So that’s why I don’t want to marry just yet. That’s why I just couldn’t get married, the way I feel now, unless it was to someone I loved so much I couldn’t help it.”

Daisy Nixon paused, her face hot. An odd feeling—as though she would like to recall what she had just “come out with”—possessed her for a moment. Never before, in all her battling and aggressive seventeen years, had she, as it were, let down her guard and talked so frankly and freely. But frankness awakens frankness; and this fine-looking stranger, with his straight-forward and pleasant manner, had drawn her out in spite of herself.

Sir William did not speak for a little while. There was a glow in his eyes, as he regarded her, that might have been the index of any one of several emotions.

“I hope you’re not mad (angry),” Daisy seized the interpretation nearest at hand of Sir William’s expression. “You needn’t be, because if I ever do fall in love, I don’t think it will be with a young fellow anyway. Boys are pretty near all

alike—you go out with them a couple of times, and you know all about them. They're all right to play with—but when a girl really falls in love, it's with a man, not a boy. That's the way it'll be with me, unless I find a boy-man, and they're as scarce as hens' teeth."

Sir William looked at her so long after she had stopped speaking, that Daisy's face, never very long at rest, changed from gravity back to its customary dimpling.

"You'll be sure to know me, anyway, next time you see me, eh?" she said, putting her head on one side.

Ware, still holding her hand, stood up. The napkin slid off his knee to the floor. Daisy, obeying a tidy feminine impulse, stooped over and with her free hand picked the doyley up and laid it on the table. Then she stood erect and bright, facing the baronet at about the level of his chin.

"Little woman," he said, his eyes shining down into hers, "you are jolly well right when you say I shan't forget you; and I want you to believe that I don't intend to forget you—in fact, haven't the slightest intention of forgetting you, or even trying to. Shall you keep on, do you think, in your present position?"

"I guess so," said Daisy, "I like the lady of the house."

"Very fine woman," said Sir William, "very

fine, indeed. . . . Now, I shan't keep you out any longer, as it must be getting late." He relinquished her hand, with a little pat, and reached down his hat and cane.

Sir William walked back with Daisy as far as the Harrison gate. On the way, he said, squeezing the hand that lay within his arm, where he had drawn it as on the previous walk in the opposite direction, "now, you'll keep on being a straightforward and good little woman, won't you? You won't let the city spoil you, I mean—it has a tendency that way, you know."

Daisy smiled up. "Oh, I guess I can take care of myself," she said, "I've had to, all my life." Her companion chuckled at this.

"Might I enquire as to the duration of that immense period of time?" he said.

"You mean, how old am I?" Daisy paused, as they reached the gate, and gently freed her arm. It was as well, she had found in the case of most previous escorts, to be cleared for rapid retreat when the good-bye moment came. It might be as well, in this case too. Men were queer, at the good-bye moment.

"That's it," Sir William said, in reply to her paraphrase of his previous enquiry. He leaned on his cane, as only an Englishman can lean on a cane—almost as though it were a part of him—and, just as she was about to reply, interjected,

"wait a bit, though. I believe I should like to have a guess at your age before you tell me. Jolly fun, guessing. Nineteen?"

"Seventeen," said Daisy.

"Dear me!" Ware brought his cane around, stood it before him, and crossed his hands on it. "Shockingly bad guessing. However, I am pleased more than I can say to know that so wise and mature a little woman is only seventeen—the sweetest age of maidenhood. And your name—do you realize we've spent a whole hour or more together, in the most intimate way, and I don't even know your name? If I were to guess at that, I should say 'Daffodil'. You dance so, if you know what I mean."

"Well," she said, "you're not so very far off it. It's Daisy."

"Bravo!" Sir William struck his cane delightedly on the pavement; "I knew—that is, I almost knew—it would be a blossom of some sort. Well, little Daisy of the West," he hooked his cane on his arm, removed his hat, and stepped forward: while Daisy, though tensed into bright vigilance against any momentary irresponsibility of the heady good-bye time, dimpled up in a mischievously tempting way, "you won't forget what we've been talking about—shall you?"

If these words, uttered softly as they were, had been followed by an attempt to take her hand,

Daisy would have drawn away. But there was no such movement. Sir William, although he had transferred his hat to the arm that held the cane, merely thrust his free hand into the side-pocket of his coat.

Daisy deepened her smile and raised her face a little more, until the light of the street-lamp was reflected in tiny elfin sparklets in each of her eyes. Her lips drew to red fulness, then parted a little. Her cheeks gathered piquantly. After a moment, her lashes fell and a little hand, with irrepressibly coquettish purpose, wandered out from behind her, felt its way up to the brooch at the breast of her blouse, paused there, then was extended toward Sir William.

The baronet's hand came out of his pocket. It did not meet hers, however. It went up before him, palm outward. He smiled at her over the tips of the fingers in a queer, distant way.

"My dear," he said (and his words were a puzzle to Daisy), "if you were less the woman, I should perhaps like you less. But don't let the thing overpower you."

With this, Sir William Ware set his hat on his head, swung his cane, and flicked a bit of pebble off the pavement.

"Au revoir, little woman," he said, still ignoring the hand she had extended toward him. With

this, and raising his hat quietly, he turned and walked away.

Daisy, letting the unreceived hand hang before her, held out and humorously pendent, looked after her vanishing escort contemplatively.

"Hmf!" she said, "no date, no nothing. Oh, well—he'll be back, if," she flushed a little, "if he wasn't fooling. I don't care, anyway."

CHAPTER VIII.

A KNIGHT IN THE KITCHEN.

DAISY went lightly and swiftly along the gravelled walk on her return to the side-door of the great Harrison house. Her mind kept returning to certain events of the meeting, giving them a romantic tinge—the cafe, with its quiet and rich appointments and the stupendous prices named on its menu for even the ordinary things; the waiter, looking straight before him, feature-fixed as a Teddy-bear; and, most of all, the presiding spirit, the polished and pleasant man who had talked so simply and companionably and yet who, in certain unexplainable ways, had unconsciously suggested that he was “somebody great.” With the whole city yet new to her—new and unexplored and fascinating—the experience through which she had just passed seemed like a chapter out of a book or a scene out of a picture-play. Looking back upon the affair now, Daisy was most amazed at her own part in it—at the strong and sane impulse which had caused her to “turn down” a proposal that, she somehow felt, if made again now, she would accept and with that acceptance drift unresistingly along the tide of a life turned to story.

"I should have taken him," Daisy murmured to herself, as she turned softly the knob of the side door of Harrison's, "while I had the chance. He would have turned out all right, for he's a gentleman, and he's old enough to know his own mind."

A thin thread-line of illumination at the bottom of the inner door showed that there was a light in the Harrison kitchen. Daisy was glad Jean had remained up for her; for, although she knew the way to the bedroom, she felt a little like a thief, prowling around the big house, on this her first unfamiliar night in it.

She opened the kitchen door. The snarl of a heavy foot turning on linoleum followed the click of the latch. Daisy saw that the tenant of the kitchen was not Jean, but Sir Thomas Harrison himself, standing in his shirt-sleeves near the faucet, drawing some water in a tumbler. Sir Thomas did not look so young with his tailor-built coat off. The slight sag in the shoulders and bulge at the waist became apparent when in his shirt-sleeves.

"We-ell, well," he said, holding up the glass and measuring the minim of water in it with his eye, "look who's with us, will yuh! Just in from keepin' the little date, hey?—he-ey, littul one? Work don't worry us none, does it? Well, little stranger, you're just in time for to have one, on me. *Suddown!*"

This last with a raise of his voice and a motion of his forefinger—his thick, blunt forefinger—toward one of the two chairs that stood by the table. Daisy, her dimples and twinkles leaping into place with a celerity that might have warned Harrison if he had known her better, sat down obediently and demurely in the chair.

Sir Thomas Harrison took another tumbler, put in it a small amount of water, brought it over to the table, and set it down alongside the other glass. Then he took a cut-glass decanter he had brought from a cabinet in the dining-room, unstoppered it, and filled each of the drinking vessels. Finally, wrinkling up his eyes until one was quite closed, and the other nearly so, he tilted his head on one side, pulled an empty chair close to and facing Daisy, and sat down in it.

"Well, chookie," he said, "here we are—just the two of us, hey? Everybody else in bed, but—we sh'd worry. Come on, now, an' have a little drink. C'm on!"

Daisy, as though she intended to drink, put out a hand and drew her glass toward her. In her eyes two vigilant and mischievous points of light danced keen as stars. Sir Thomas Harrison tipped his glass joltingly against hers, set it to the lips that bulged red and coarse-textured, below his clipped moustache; and tossed off his liquor. Then he smacked his glass down on the table, where Daisy's still stood untouched.

"Well," he said, "why don't y' drink? But don't if yuh don't wantah. Maybe 'taint good for little girls. Apt to make 'em fr-risky, hey? I know somethin' is better for 'em. O you baby, you *sassy* babee—come on to Poppa," and, with a sudden movement, Sir Thomas Harrison caught his new dining-room girl by the wrist and drew her upon his fleshy knee.

"There," he said,—in his voice the hoarse burr, and in his manner the incoherence, of a man fast nearing the irresponsible edge of passion, "how's that—better. Hey? Uh?" He slipped an arm around her waist.

Daisy caught her lip under her teeth to keep from laughing outright as she glanced around into his red, flaming face. She leaned a little away from him, one toe alertly on the floor, the other dangling.

"I suppose," she said, coolly, "you think you're pretty smart, don't you? Is this why the last girl left?"

"I guess no-ot," Harrison's voice had the emphasis of truth as he had a momentary mental picture of Alice sitting where Daisy sat now, "that sour-mugged English rake-handle! I—I couldn't love a girl with a face like that, little one. You know that, don't y'? Uh?" The arm about Daisy's waist squeezed her. "C'm on—give us a little baby kiss."

~~"Nothing slow about you, is there?"~~ commented Daisy; the two watchful points of light in her eyes dancing like dagger-tips. Her employer's answer to this apparent compliment was to bring his other arm off the table and ~~place it about her.~~

Daisy never, even for the space of one lid-flash, ceased to watch the red intemperate face whose skin was now commencing to twitch in places like the hide of a horse under fly-bites. Passion had the man beyond speech now. Presently there would be a contraction of the eyelids, making the eyes small and round and wicked and ugly. Then there would be a leap of flame in the constricted irises, the sign that lust's madness had broken loose. Daisy, to whom these signals, in their course and succession, were familiar from many a perusal of many a masculine face, watched Harrison's features as keenly, and almost as coolly, as a doctor-specialist watches the lineaments of a patient in a crisis.

At the moment when she saw restraint was going, just before the warning flame leapt, Daisy Nixon leaned away and put her palm against his chest.

"I won't kiss you," she said, flashing her lids up and down, "for nothing."

Harrison took his right hand from about her and thrust it into his pocket. He pulled out a great roll of bills, and made to strip one off.

"Give me it all!" cried Daisy, keeping her palm against his chest, where she could feel the powerful, lustful heart hammering.

"All!" ~~Harrison managed to blurt~~, huskily, throwing his brows up in oaf-like protest, "all! Why, there's fifteen hundred dollars in that bunch!"

"Give it to me," repeated Daisy, clear-toned, "or else let me go."

Harrison was too far advanced in his midnight madness to accept the saner alternative. He thrust the roll of bills into her hand.

"Now take away your hands a minute," said Daisy Nixon. As Harrison, all his attention concentrated on the mastering impulse of the moment, half-involuntarily obeyed the brisk request, she sprang with a lightning movement off his knee and away.

"Now, Mr. Man," she said, "you just dare to lay a finger on me, or to try to get this money back, and I'll yell. Jean the cook is sleeping just overhead, and she'd be down here before you could say 'Jack Robi'son'."

At the change that came over Harrison's face, Daisy let loose the laugh that had been bobbing at her lips ever since the beginning of the encounter. She laughed until she sank into a chair helpless. She knew that Harrison had had the theory most men of his type held, that a man need

only force a girl up to a certain point and her own answering passion would do the rest. She laughed so hard that she missed the gradations by which Sir Thomas Harrison passed from lust to wrath. When, finally, she straightened from her paroxysm, he was leaning forward, elbow on table, his chin thrust out ready for speech, and on his face a sneer—such a sneer!—Daisy had never imagined even Harrison could look so ugly!

“So-me little schemer!” he slid, out of the side of his mouth. Words came easily enough now. “But don’t think you win—oh, no-o! D’ye know what I’m going to do, if you don’t hand over that money?”

“Oh,” Daisy stood up, tilting her head aside, and dimpling, “The money is all that’s bothering you now, is it? I thought maybe you were going to say you were sorry.”

“I’m mighty sorry,” Harrison snarled, “that you got that good money in your thief’s fist. That’s all I’m sorry about. But, as I say, you’re going to hand it over, an’ you’re a-going to hand it over quick. D’ye hear!”

“I hear,” said the girl, “and I’m going to show *you* something now. Here’s all I care for your dirty money.”

With these words, and before Harrison, watching in bewilderment, realized what she intended to do, Daisy Nixon lifted the lid of the big kitchen

gas and coal range, thrust the roll of bills into the coals, and gave it a quick stab with the poker. A fifteen-hundred dollar flame leaped up at the same moment as Harrison, with a sound like a lion's coughing roar, leaped up too. Words failed him for several seconds, as he stood above the transient fire-flicker, with its heart of worthless ashes.

"Well," he said, at length, in a level hard snarl, "now I *am* goin' to fix you, you low-life heifer. You could 'a stopped me before by handin' over the money, and I'd have let the matter drop. But now I'm goin' to lay information against you for stealin' that money—see? I'm a-goin to have you arrested—see? I got the pull an' the infloo'nce in this town for to do it," the contractor thrust his thumbs into the armholes of his vest, "and you—who are you? Nobody, nobody! Still, I may be easy with you yet, if—"

"Ay, ye may, if ye're canny." The answer came not from Daisy, but from Jean the Scotch cook, who came out of the door at the foot of the bedroom stair. "It's a gude thing y'r clackin' woke me up, Sir Thomas Harrison. I've been bidin' behind the door here quite a wee while, an' I've heard a grand lot o' your proposin' and so forth. Now, ye'll juist tak your crooked mouth awa' to y'r bed—that's what you'll do!"

"An' you," Harrison, at first taken aback, had

recovered himself and had stood, a thick finger levelled at her, waiting for her to finish speaking, "you will take notice. So will you," pointing to Daisy. "I'll clean my kitchen o' the crowd that's runnin' things in it now, if we have to get down and do the cookin' ourselves till we get decent help. Neither of you's worth a hurra——"

"I'll tak' no notice from you," Jean rejoined, calmly, "I'll not inconvenience your good leddy that far. Na, na, Sir Thomas. We'll bide here, and do our work weel, and draw our fair pay when it's due, an' keep to our end of the hoose, and you'll just keep to yours. Come awa to y'r bed, lassie."

Harrison regarded the speaker a moment, his head down and brow thrust forward, as though appraising Jean's capacity for a "come-back." She returned his belligerent scrutiny with a flinty look in her blue Scotch eyes under their sandy lashes. He felt in his upper vest-pocket for a cigar, bit it, and stuck it between his teeth; then spun on his heel.

"I can't waste no more time arguin' with the help," he said, as he passed through the swinging door, "I'll see about this in the morning."

"Ey, ye'll see bonnier when ye sleep over the notion," Jean said, as the door swung to behind him. She put an arm, ridged with muscle like a man's, about Daisy's shoulders and propelled her

through the stair-door and up the steps to the bedroom.

"He'll no trouble us, I'm thinkin'," she said, as she closed the bedroom door behind her and turned the key in the lock; "he kens weel there's folk on this street w'd be after Jean McTavish like a fair swarm o' bees, if they heard she was needin' a situation. An' he'll no dischairge you, bairnie, for he'll be wantin' to get his ain back—he's that kind, ye see. Forbye, he kens fine we could put him in his place wi' a word, after this nicht's goings-on. He's braw material for a 'beltit knight', as oor Bawby Burrns has it—is he no?"

"He's a bad, bad man," Daisy murmured, dimpling down reflectively, "so bad, I almost like him. I'm going to have some more fun with him, before I'm through."

"Ey, ye're just gabbin', lassie," Jean kicked off her night-slippers, thrust her feet into bed, lay back, drew the coverlet up over a chest broad and flat as a man's, and, with a hand thrust under the back of her head, regarded Daisy from the pillow. "Ye'r no sic a trollop as ye'd mak' yersel' oot to be. If I catch ye in in any capers—any mischief, I mean, for I ken there's nae bad in ye—I'll skelp ye as I would a bairn. Mind that. Get y'r duddies off, now, an' get to bed, for to-morrow's house-cleanin' day."

CHAPTER IX.

A DANCE AND AN INVITATION.

“WELL, ye see,” Jean remarked, next evening, as the two girls, in the delicious after-supper leisure of house-cleaning day, sat together in the kitchen, “he didna even keek in on us, all day; an’ he’s said naething to the Mistress, for she’s the same as ever an’ couldn’t keep it in if she was worried.”

Daisy, her virile young self merely exhilarated, as it is with the healthy young, after the long day of muscular labor, was barren of speech but fruitful of glances out through the window, where the sunlight of the long evening laid an elbow of shadow at the root of each of the prim trees bordering Harrison’s cement drive, and shone red upon the open doorway of the garage. Harrison was spending the evening out somewhere, and the big car was gone; but the electric brougham in which Lady Harrison—who merely “put on style” by her husband’s request, and would really much rather have walked, or taken the trolley-car, on her trips downtown—paid her social calls or went shopping, stood invitingly in its place.

“Can the Missis run that thing?” said Daisy.

“Ey,” said Jean, who had been regarding the

younger girl's curves and color a little wistfully, but none the less good-heartedly, "Ou, ay. She disna like it, though. She's a plain woman—a richt leddy, though she was na born to it, no more than him, ye ken."

"I wish she'd give that pretty car to me," said Daisy.

"Ay," Jean smiled reflectively, "nae doubt, nae doubt. If wishes were electric buggies, there's nane of us would tramp. She'd be daft enough to give it to ye, too, I doubt, if it wasna for her man. Ey, ey—whiles I wish I had him, just for a wee. I'd train him the way a mon should walk, so I would. Still, there's got tae be a master, ye ken, in every family. I wouldna like a man that was saft, all around. I'd want him tae be canny in business, like Sir Thomas, ye see—but I'd want tae be mistress at home. . . . But, by the bye, lassie, speakin' o' men n' cattle o' yon kind," Jean smiled to herself as she said this, and wished some man, for the good of his conceit, had happened along unexpectedly and heard this comparison, slipping out, as it had, by happy inspiration,

"how wad ye like the evenin' out? The Mistress hersel' said that, as ye were a young thing and would likely be wantin' a good time, to give ye an evenin' to yerself whenever I could spare ye."

Daisy needed no second intimation. She bounced out of her chair, agile and untired as though it

were morning and she just up. Then she paused a moment, and her face fell a little.

"My skirt is all right," she said, "but I have no clean waist."

Jean paused; knuckles reflectively akimbo.

"What's y'r size, lassie?" she said.

"Thirty-eight."

"Thirty-eight," Jean's eyes opened; "losh, ye're fu'-breastit for a bairn. I doubt a waist o' mine wadna be much aboon yir fit. I'm wide across; but ye're fair wide too, an' then ye come out in front forbye. Gie your face a dicht off- whilst I rummage my trunk."

A little less than half an hour later, Daisy,—her serge skirt brushed by Jean's friendly hand to an appearance of almost newness, and wearing a silk waist of Miss McTavish's that, with a few shrewd tucks here and there, had been reduced to fit Daisy's round, plump torso—came dancingly out between the stone gateposts at the end of the Harrison drive. Her cheeks were flushed, her eyes bright. Every nerve tingled with the zest of life.

As she reached the sidewalk, a battered auto was just about to turn in the gateway through which she had come. At her appearance, however, the driver came to a halt.

"Hello, stranger," he said, sociably, "where d'ye think you're going."

Daisy, who knew how to "use her eyes," as-

sumed an expression which just fitted the occasion.

"Got a dollar you ain't usin'?" enquired the chauffeur, who was her creditor of the jitney fare. He did not glance at her as he spoke, but continued to look straight before him in his characteristic, businesslike way—showing, as formerly, a humorous profile, an eye-corner that twinkled, and hair so thick and curly that he was obliged to keep his peaked driver's cap sideways to keep it on at all.

Daisy looked down, moving her toe with shyness, among the grass-roots at the edge of the sidewalk. "I have ten cents," she said, "for—for street-car fare."

"Carfare where to?" enquired the taxi-driver, promptly.

"Nowhere," said Daisy.

"They're a poor bunch there. Don't go. Stranger in town?"

"Oh, not too strange, you know," said Daisy, glancing at him out of the corner of her eye.

"That's all right, then," the young man opened the fore-door of his car and moved over a little on his seat. "Jump in. I'll whirl you out to city park."

"Oh-h, no-o-o," Daisy made her mouth into a mischevious oval of protest, "I couldn't do-oo that."

"Why couldn't you?" the driver's head jerked half-around, in a brief study of her face. "Got to report to mother?"

"I couldn't afford it," said Daisy; "I'm in debt now, ain't I?"

"You're in debt," said the young man, "but your credit's good as long as I got the gasoline. Hop in!"

The girl stepped forward; set her toe on the running-board; then drew it off, and backed away.

"Try again," observed the driver, dryly; "one—two—three—go!"

"What's out at this city park?" said Daisy.

"Oh, pretty near everything," Dancing, ice-cream, trees, jollyers. Was you never out to a park?"

"Never with a fellow I didn't know," Daisy replied, in merry equivocation.

"Well, then, right here's where you make the break," the chauffeur remarked; adding, sententiously, "it's harder to start anything, the longer you wait."

"I won't be with you long," he pursued, after a moment, "if that's all you're worryin' about. I'm supposed to be workin'. I'll take you out to the dance-pavilion and make you acquainted with some of the fellows an' girls. Then I'll have to come back downtown again, and get on my run. I'll come out to the park again for you, about

eleven o'clock, and bring you home. How's that get you, youngster?"

"It sounds all right," said Daisy, "all except the coming-home part. Do I have to come home with you?"

"You bet you do," said the chauffeur stoutly, "or else it's all off." He reached out and drew the auto-door half shut; his mouth tilted up in a dry way, his eye slanted humorously upon her.

"All right," Daisy countered, "it's all off, then, if that's how you feel. I don't know as I'd have gone with you anyhow. I—I've got carfare—ten cents carfare—if I should take a notion to go."

"How you goin' to find your way?"

"Where?"

"Park."

"How d'you know I'd go to the park?"

"I know blame well you'll go there," said the chauffeur, "now I've told you about it. Kiddo, the hay sticks out o' your hair all over. What kind o' farmers was your people?"

"The kind that minded their own business," Daisy, with a little swing of her hips, turned away, chin and nose in the air; "Good-night, Mr. City Bug. I'm much obliged for your offer; but if I want to go to the park, I'll pick up some *nice* fellow uptown and get him to take me. Some *nice* fellow!"

"Here!" the chauffeur jerked out, rattling the door, "jump into this car, you—you—"

Daisy went on a few steps; then, just as her intended pilot was about to bang the door shut and start his engine, she turned.

"Can I come home with who I like, then, if I go?" she queried, dimpling all over as she wrestled with her merriment.

"Yes, blame you!" said the taxicab driver, "you can come home with the Devil, if you like. Come on—get in! Don't keep me here all night, waiting' for a dead-head passenger to burn up four mile o'-juice on."

Daisy stepped in and sat down, warm and flushed and round, right beside him. Then she had a good laugh, and thereby relieved herself.

"Take them bughouse streaks often?" her host enquired; his dry-pursed mouth, his careless hat, and his eyes that looked regardlessly ahead through the windshield, giving him, to Daisy, a kind of big-brother aspect—the look of a man to be trusted.

"This was easy," he said, presently, as the car rushed away down-street—the speedometer indicating that the speed limit was only being exceeded by ten miles an hour; "dead easy. Ain't you scared, kid? S'posin' I was a murderer or something, after all!"

"I'm not scared." Daisy slid a soft glance up at him.

"All right," said her companion, "for that, we go to the park, like I said—this time. I had a half a mind to ride you to the bridge and dump you into the river. I'm a revengeful son of gun when I'm crossed."

It was now about eight o'clock. The streets were filling with the promenaders of evening, each in his or her best "bib and tucker," enjoying the worker's well-earned off-hour of spooning or strolling. Motorcycles darted in and out among the sedater and larger vehicles, exploding like machine-guns; in the seat of each a happy youth with either smile or cigarette or both, and often behind him, on a kind of pillion, a girl, with the happily-needful arm placed about him for purposes of support. Sometimes the girl was in a side-car, but then she was generally the motorcyclist's wife. Automobiles glided ahead or beside, down the smooth broad asphalt, like boats on a canal. As the street ribboned away behind Daisy and her driver, there showed gradually more green spaces on the streets. Before long, the houses grew few and drew away, as it were, from the roadside. Green woods scalloped the skyline. The asphalt ended, and they were running on a smooth-graded road, oiled to keep down the dust. There was an interval of quiet bowling along through sunset woodland, with Nature's lawns interspersing; then life, to Daisy's relief, began

to bubble and sparkle around them again. They had reached the gate of the park at the same time as two crowded street-cars; and, obeying traffic rules, halted to let the crowd of passengers — many-hued in their summer dresses as though one were looking at them through a prism—dance and chatter and giggle and stalk past, arm-linked or baby-toting or soberly single, until the road was clear. Then the curly-haired young man spun his steering-wheel, describing an easy and rapid turn; and they were sailing down a road straight as a line, with a great white pavilion awaiting them from the top of its smooth-lawned hill. On either side, down the walking-paths, came an endless stream of pedestrians, noisy and gay in their evening emancipation, with bare-legged youngsters breaking loose, racing and chasing across the green as Daisy had seen the calves do in spring.

Everybody was “out for a good time.” The air was like a tonic; the park like a panorama. Between the capes of shrubbery and across the lawns, and about the thronged pavilion and along the governed paths, the evening breeze floated like a lily-breath, slow and cool and sweet.

“Well, here we are,” said the driver, parking his taxi at the end of a long row of vehicles in front of the pavilion. “Sorry you come, now, ain’t you? Yes, you are—not! Hey, don’t knock

a hole in the hood of my rig, just because you think you're done with me."

Daisy had popped out of her seat so quickly that she had bumped her head against the autotop. Her spirits were at such a pitch of ecstasy that, in her haste to open the fore-door, she jammed the catch. She hauled and wrenched vainly at it, while her companion sat and grinned.

"Kind of a combination lock, huh, kid?" he observed, his eyes wrinkling and his shoulders shaking a little—his way of expressing merriment.

"Don't talk crazy," Daisy sat up, sucking a finger she had pinched in the mechanism. "Get this thing open!"

"Aw, no," the chauffeur was enjoying himself hugely; "let's just set here. We don't want to—hi, there!"

For Daisy had squirmed agilely out over the top of the door. In doing this, she had accidentally pushed the catch the right way; so that, as she jumped down from the running-board, the door came docilely open under her hand.

"That ain't stylish," remarked the taxi-driver, climbing out. "In this town, we open the door *before* we get out—not after. Come on, then, friend, and buy me a drink. You said you had a dime, didn't you?"

"Where is the dance?" said Daisy, looking

about her delightedly as they ascended the broad flight of steps leading into the pavilion.

"Nobody ever dances till after they have a nut sundae or something," was the comment of her escort, "I'll race you upstairs, partner."

Daisy accepted the gage, and reached the stair-top one step ahead. The two followed a crowd of people through an arched double-doorway, and sat down at a little round table with metal underbody and two companionable, iron-spindled chairs. About them, the whole world, it seemed, was eating ice-cream or drinking colored compounds out of glasses through straws.

Through a door at the side of the ice-cream room, Daisy could see couples, on a long perspective of shining floor, whirling by in the conventional embrace of the dance. The thing got into her blood.

"Come on," she said, a moment or so later, as she hastily spooned up the last of her "sundae," "I'll give you the first dance, Mr. Man, if you take me out there."

"Now you got me," said the chauffeur, with a momentary sheepishness; "I don't dance. I'm a ballplayer." The speaker's tone, as he made this apology, would seem to indicate that the two were accomplishments impossible to find in one and the same person.

In the dancing-room, the chauffeur had a nod

for everybody and from everybody. The girls, especially, tilted heads on one side, or glanced up at him through the coquettish corner of the eye, or jumped up out of seats and buttonholed him and danced up and down in front of him—just according as they were sly, or coquettish, or impulsive. Some glanced in an armed way at Daisy, who seemed to be drawing a good deal of attention from the “boys” as she entered. Miss Nixon and her escort had arrived at a moment when the musicians were taking an intermission; and, as the benches along the side of the dancing-hall were filled, there was ample opportunity for a few introductions.

“This,” said the chauffeur, stopping and putting his arm around the waist of a mighty man with sandy hair and a neck so red—naturally red—that it was almost scarlet, “is Baby Jock. Jock, this is a friend of mine from out among the homesteads. She is pretty near dead with staying at home nights, and I want you to show her a good time. I got to go back to my run. . . . Be back at closin’-time, kid, to see if you’ve changed your mind about lettin’ me take you home.” With this, and a careless parting salute, the taxi-driver slipped out, leaving Daisy with her new friend, the red-necked Colossus.

“Well,” said Baby Jock, curving his hand around his chin and looking largely down at her,

"the Scots aye drifts thegither, heh? . . . Don't tell me ye're no Scot, now, after that, lassie."

Daisy gave her mouth a little twist in lieu of answering, being absorbed in the scene before her.

"Yon Jamie," said her companion—nudging her lightly this time, to attract her attention, "forgot to leave me the name, when he left the lass."

"Eh?" said Daisy, a little distantly.

"The name, ye ken?" repeated Jock, "juist give me the nickname, if the name itself's too long." He continued to look at her in an amused way, waiting patiently. Presently Daisy turned, lifted her dancing eyes, and beamed on the big Scot.

"Ay," said Baby Jock, drily, replying to the glance, "ye're ready to talk at last, heh? 'Miss McKechnie', ye said the name was, didn't ye?"

"My name?" Daisy dimpled; "oh, my name's Daisy Nixon. Say what's the name of that boy who brought me here?"

Baby Jock stared, open-mouthed. Then he doubled up and slapped his knee.

"Heh, but ye're an odd buddy," he said; "but ye're canny, no to give ha'pence for the name if the mon himself's a'richt. Yon lad's name's Jamie Knight. Here's thae fiddles skirlin' again. Come on and have a dance, lassie."

As Daisy and her partner circled around the room for the second time, she heard a girl with

a humorous nasal voice, one of a couple just behind, remark: "Say, that's like Jim Knight, ain't it. Brings a strange girl in here, and ties up the second best dancer in the hall. Look at the face on Leeby Cameron. Bet a quarter she has a word or two to say to her Jock, on the way home to-night!"

"Ay, she means me," said Baby Jock, with mock egotism, looking down twinklingly at Daisy. "Does that no make ye proud-like; to know the company ye're in. But just haud yersel', and I'll mak' ye prouder yet. D'ye see yon straight-backit fellow, with the stiff hair, third couple to the right from us?"

"Who's he?"

"Ye'll no be long in this town till ye ken who he is. Yon's Nick Cluett, the middleweight champion o' the boxin' ring. I dinna ken just where I stand in the dancin'—ye canna' althegither go by what ye just heard oor neighbor, behind here, say—but there's nae doubt where Nick stands. He's the best on the floor, by long odds. I'll see that ye have the next dance with him. Nick, he never promises a dance ahead, so he'll no be down on anybody's programme for the next turn on the floor."

"Who's Leeby Cameron?" said Daisy.

"She's juist hersel'," responded Baby Jock,

evasively, as the dance-music ended. "Hut, Nick, lad!"

A young man with heavy dark eyebrows and his hair combed straight up from a forehead with transverse wrinkles, as it were, ironed into it, came lightly across the floor, one hand in his pocket. As he drew near, Daisy saw that his hips and shoulders moved with a strong rigidity, as though all in one piece, and that his back was straight as a line. He had recently shaved, but not very closely; and all over his chin and cheeks black pepper-dots of stiff bristles pricked forth in a kind of index of the lad's superb virility. He had a kind of fixed smile, deprecating, almost apologetic. He carried his head canted slightly forward and down; and, instead of tilting it back when he looked up, merely raised his eyebrows. This habit was what had engraven the transverse wrinkles across his forehead.

"Well, Babe," he said to Jock, casting a quick but careless glance at Daisy, "what d'ye know!"

"I hae a lass here," said Daisy's escort, "wha's lookin' for a dancin' partner. Miss Nixon, I'll leave ye with Mr. Cluett while I go 'tend to my family affairs yonder," Jock humorously indicated the chair upon which Miss Leeby Cameron sat glowering; and, with a genial parting grin to Daisy, moved off toward his lady-love.

A man cannot excel in everything, and Nick

Cluett, champion pugilist, was no talker. In fact, he looked for a moment as though he were about to walk away and leave Daisy standing in the middle of the floor.

"He says you're a fine dancer," primed Daisy.

Nick Cluett's eyebrows travelled up, and his dark face sloped at an angle, in its perpetually-smiling way, above hers.

"Want to try me?" he jettied.

"I don't mind if I do," said Daisy, demurely.

"Do anything once?—eh, kid?" commented Mr. Cluett, taking her upper arm in a hand of steel fibre, propelling her toward a bench, and drawing her down upon it in the manner of a man to whom girls had voluntarily given the privilege of handling them freely; "come to think of it, now, you can be a life-saver, if you like, see?"

"How?" Daisy glanced at him sidewise.

"Why", Nick Cluett crossed his knees, dropped his elbow across the uppermost leg, and leaned his broad shoulders forward till his hard bulging triceps muscle touched her arm, "Bob Masterman—he's the fellow looks after my business—is getting up a little party after the 'boxin' show to-morrow night, and bringing along his girl. How would you like to come as *my* partner? Eh, little sporto?"

"I don't know," said Daisy, guardedly.
"Where's the party at?"

"Our rooms, likely," said Nick Cluett, coolly; "little supper—game o' cards—any old thing to kill time. Bob!"

A plump man in a check suit detached himself from a group near by.

"Bob, Miss—what's this your name is, again?—Miss Nixon here's to have first chance to round out our little party of four to-morrow night. She'll let you know at the end of the dance if she can come."

"Sure she'll come," said Mr. Masterman, unctuously, as he held Daisy's hand and breathed cigar-breath copiously into her face; "sure she'll come." He pumped the hand up and down, and tilted his fat face to one side.

"Beat it," said Mr. Cluett, tersely. Mr. Masterman promptly obeyed, glancing back coquettishly over one plethoric shoulder as he rejoined his group.

The music started again. Nick Cluett and Daisy stood up, linked, and were off. Probably no greater sum total of sheer glowing virility was ever contained in any couple of dancers than in the flushed ecstatic girl and the dark puma-like man who danced, as he fought, with a beautiful "footwork" that the eye could admire, but that the watcher could not emulate. Daisy, who had always been a good dancer, was on her mettle as she saw other couples stop to watch; and the two

footed it in a perfect accord that was a treat to see. Masterman, who never had to be told verbally what any situation in which Cluett was concerned required, slipped over and passed a bill and a billet to the orchestra leader at the time when the music usually came to a pause; and the dance continued without the usual intermission. Cluett, to whom dancing was as casual as boxing practice, had his attention free to contemplate his partner as she glided, warm and full of zest and delight, in the sinewy band of his arm. What with his dancing reputation and his boxing fame, he had been surfeited with attention from girls, until they had become a little flat and flavorless to him; but there was something so new and natural in Daisy's expression, and something so fresh and forthright in what he had heard of her talk, that his relish awoke.

"You're some kid," he said, squeezing her arm as he led her to the seat at the side of the room, when the dance was done; "hey, waiter!" An attendant with a tray came over, lithely and quickly.

"Name your dope, Dimples," said Mr. Cluett.

"Anything," responded Daisy, answering with all her merry might to the name bestowed, as she beamed up into the dark face with its hard lines and continual smile, "anything that you think's good for me, Mr. Cluett."

"Nut sundae—twice," her companion directed,

briefly, with a sidewise jerk of his head at the tray bearer, who bowed response as to a peer of the realm.

"Well, Sweetness," Nick Cluett said, a moment later, as they applied themselves to the refreshment, "how about it?"

"How about what?" Daisy's tone was ingenuous and her look demure.

"You know," said Mr. Cluett; "our little party?"

"I don't know," Daisy put her head on one side teasingly.

"That's what you said before," observed Mr. Cluett; "ain't you thought it over yet?"

Daisy tilted her head over to the other side, displaying a round line of cheek and one of the dimples to which Mr. Cluett had previously alluded.

"Maybe," she murmured.

"Well," said Mr. Cluett, "I ain't no hand at coaxin', so we'll let it go at that. Bob'll see you, after the next two dances. I got to go now, for a little work-out with the mitts, before bedtime. I'd like to have had another dance." This was a long speech for the taciturn Nick Cluett; and he breathed with relief as he got it "off his system".

"I'll go to your party, I guess," said Daisy, "so you can tell that Mr. Masterman to never mind seeing me. I'm not strong enough to stand seeing him any more than once in an evening."

Mr. Cluett's fixed smile momentarily deepened a little, as he rose to take his leave. "I suppose, as things is, it's lucky you don't take very strong to Bob, or you'd have let me go away still guessin'—eh, little one? I'll tell him it's settled, then. But don't you go and throw me down."

Jimmy Knight called with his jitney for Daisy, at about midnight. The trip home was made in comparative silence; but, as the car stopped at the Harrison gate, he said, "what are you goin' to do with yourself t'mor'? Got a date, I s'pose . . . Yes, of course you have—I see it in your eye. Won't you tell Brother Jim where you're goin'?"

Daisy waited till she had dismounted and stepped just within the big stone gateposts, before she answered. Then she looked down thoughtfully, moving her toe in the gravel.

"I'm—oh, I'm just—just taking a dare," she said; then laughed outright as she glanced up and met his mystified look. "Good-bye, Jimmy Knight—and thanks for the 'lift'."

CHAPTER X.

THE BOXING MATCH AND AFTERWARD.

DAISY stood before her mirror, "fixing" her hair. Whether it was Daisy's native knack of coiffure, or whether it was that her hair was of that wavy kind which "fixes" becomingly almost by itself, she secured the effect she wanted without much trouble. The dark-blue dress she had bought with fifteen dollars borrowed from Jean, and to which she had pinned a lace collar, set off her neck well. She made a little face at herself in the looking-glass and turned about, just in time to face Jean, who had entered quietly, shutting the door behind her.

"What like o' company is yon ye're keepin', lassie?" Jean, as she spoke, sat down on the edge of the bed, spreading out her strong digits over her knees in a masculine attitude.

"What company?" said Daisy, a little puzzled. She had made no mention of her party to Jean.

"Yon two bidin' down in the kitchen the now," Jean replied, regarding Daisy in a slow speculative way, as though searching for some characteristic she had perchance overlooked in forming her estimate of the girl; "a mon wha's breath smells of thae lozenges, and a thick-legged wench

that rolls her eyes aboot. They askit for you, by your ain name, too. Did ye tell them to ca', or," Jean's tone grew sternly hopeful, "shall I send them packin'?"

"I guess it's me they want," said Daisy, recognizing Masterman in Jean's description of the man. Then she added, meeting the elder woman's glance challengingly, "I'm going to a boxing-match, and to a—a little party—afterwrds, with Nick Cluett the fighter."

Somewhat to Daisy's surprise, Jean seemed to look less severe as she heard the host of the "little party" named.

"Well," she said, after a moment, "I was just twa minds about lockin' ye in, lassie, and sending they people aboot their business; but if it's Nicky Cluett ye're gaun with, ye'll tak' no harm—that is, unless ye encourage him, an' then ye'll tak' no end o' harm, and it'll serve ye right. My cousin Jock Lauder—Baby Jock, they call him—kens Nick weel."

"Is Baby Jock your cousin?" said Daisy, "why, I had a dance with him last night, out at the park.

"Is that so, then?" Jean leaned forward with interest. "Jock's a fighter too, although he'd never let on, withoot ye speir him direct. . . . Well, gae along, then, to your pairty—but keep a sharp eye on yon person with the scentit breath. I'd no trust *him* as far as I could cast him."

The long red automobile that had been waiting near the sidewalk outside the Harrison gateway, answered to the electric starter with a tigerish snore and, as the clutch was thrown on, bore out the feline similitude with a four-yard leap that brought it diagonally out into rapid motion down the street.

"Any good with the mitts?" asked Mr. Masterman jocularly, turning toward Daisy his globular face with its lightish eyebrows and large, flexible lips, that rolled and curled like leaf-edges with perennial relish of the faculty of speech.

"Aw, talk sense, Bob," smoothly intervened Miss Stella Yockley—she whom Jean had described as "a thick-legged wench that rolls her eyes about"—"Miss Nixon's a *lady*—can't you see! A perfect lady—huh?" And, as though to imply that this was a joke, from which Mr. Masterman was excluded, Miss Yockley, under cover of a hand raised to dab at her front hair, winked at Daisy.

Daisy responded with a twinkling, half-smiling, non-committal look, and then turned her face streetward. The sensation of the swift ride along the thoroughfare, with its glittering electric lamps, its traffic roar, and its trampling—these influences, and the anticipation of risk in the coming "little party" at an unnamed place, with men of untested tendencies, had strung the girl's nerves to a pleasant tension of excitement. Talk

would interfere with her enjoyment of the feeling which thrilled her. Besides, Mr. Masterman's face pained Daisy. These were the reasons she chose to watch the sights of the street in preference to talking.

Cutting corners with a lawless brevity after he past the last point policeman, Mr. Masterman finally brought his car to an adroit and easy halt in a line of others before the door of a big theatre. Dismounting, he swung Miss Yockley to the curb. Daisy hopped out of the tonneau without aid. The three passed through the vestibule; and, as they confronted the ticket-taker, Mr. Masterman said, tersely, "Girls is with me, Harry", and the official ogling Daisy a little, stood docilely aside.

A few moments later, Daisy Nixon, entering a curtained way and sitting down alongside Miss Yockley on green plush seats in the lower right-hand box, had her first look at a stage set for a boxing match.

"What are the ropes for?" she said to Miss Yockley, as she stared across the bare stage floor, with its Spartan garniture—the hempen square, the backless wooden stools facing each other diagonally, the battered water-buckets, each with its bobbing sponge.

"You can search me, honey," absently returned Miss Stella; who was too busy searching, with the eyes that "rolled about", for acquaintances

among the audience, to pay much attention, either to her "kid" companion or to the squared "ring" which she had, as it were, seen a hundred times but never looked at. Miss Yockley had always been too much occupied with observing the human and masculine element in "fights", to notice the paraphernalia.

Continuing to watch the stage with a kind of unexplainable fascination, Daisy Nixon presently had her interest rewarded by the appearance of a slim and agile young man in a sleeveless gymnasium shirt, gray trousers, and canvas shoes, whose coming seemed to be the signal for the surging-in of a crowd from both wings, filling the rows of empty chairs at the ringside. Among this crowd, which included newspaper reporters, moneyed patrons of the boxing bouts, and near friends or relatives of those who were to take part in the matches of the evening, Daisy soon picked out the large ingratiating face of Mr. Masterman.

When her eyes next turned toward the fighting ring, she saw that two youths in trunk tights had in the interval wriggled through the ropes and seated themselves on the chairs or stools that faced each other at diagonally opposite corners of the enclosure. The gray-trouserèd young man stepped to that side of the roped arena next the orchestra-pit and, lifting to the audience a face

on which the nose had been, by some mishap of the near or remote past, forever pushed sidewise, so that it seemed to recline on the left cheek, said, laconic and loud:

“Ladhies and gentlemen, th’ firsth bout on this evenink’s programme it will be four two-minutth rounts between Spider Clausewitz—on my right—and Younk Kelly—on my left.”

Spider Clausewitz—he on the speaker’s right—did not hear the announcement. His chief interest at the moment was in sizing up the pugilistic bargain in the opposite corner with shrewd Semitic slits of eyes. One end of his mouth was tilted up in a calculating way to meet the nostril. His gloves were folded across his waistband; his lean bare back convexed in a negligent arch. If he did not win, he would at least see that he did not lose. He knew that he was master of the situation sufficiently to guarantee that; so Spider’s mind was easy.

So, too, in fact was the mind behind Young Kelly’s broad-staring, half-grinning, Hibernian countenance. His confidence was expressed in an attitude which was the exact opposite of Spider’s. He sat so aggressively erect that his back was concave. His eyes were round and unwinking as those of a young bantam. His pose suggested that he was, as it were, just waiting to be turned loose.

It seemed but a moment after the announcer—who was also the referee—finished his proclamation, till Daisy, with the excitement of the new spectator, saw the two fighting “comers” tearing into each other in the middle of the roped enclosure in a way that made the audience shout with glee. Young Kelly, his black eyes like beads, was giving every ounce of vigor he had to the combat. Clausewitz, though fighting back smartly to avoid giving away anything on points, was more careful in his expenditure of energy. Daisy found herself mentally taking sides with the Irish boy; and it was therefore with delight that presently she saw Spider’s head imprisoned tightly in the robust loop of Young Kelly’s arm. But Kelly, after playfully threatening the captured head with his glove, turned the Spider loose again. The audience whooped.

Presently, however, Clausewitz also had a chance to show courtesy and, with instinctive shrewdness seized it. A sudden nausea, resulting from some chance blow along the nerve-centres of the spine, unexpectedly made Kelly wilt visibly. His face turned pale-greenish. Perspiration-beads showed across his chest and forehead. His guarding arm wobbled.

Clausewitz saw the situation at a glance. He could have finished his opponent in a second with a stiff blow to the jaw-point. But such a win

would gain him nothing in the goodwill of the public, for it was obvious to all those in the seats near the ring that Kelly was sick and practically defenceless.

It is by policy as much as by prowess that the young pugilist climbs to the top. So Spider, cautiously dropping his guard, slid an arm about Kelly and escorted him ostentatiously to the stool in the corner of the roped square. Again the audience cheered.

"Well," said Daisy, clapping her hands with the rest of the spectators as she turned to Miss Yockley, "the lad wasn't mean, was he, after all."

"He's one wise kid," said Miss Stella, yawning. "I wish they's quit killin' time with stuff like that, though, an' call on the big bout. Wait till you see Nicky Cluett at work. Wait till you see Nicky Cluett at work! He's offering a thousand dollars to-night to anybody that will out-point him in four rounds. This is one time, honey, when you and I are billed to see some fun—more farce-comedy than fightin' though—when these half-baked fighters comes after Nick's money."

Miss Yockley's wish was not long in being gratified. The second "preliminary" was less than one round in duration, and afforded Daisy, for the first time in her life, that rather sickening spectacle of a strong man sprawled half-unconscious over the straining ropes of a ring, trying

vainly to rise to his feet, while another waited with tensed body to strike him down again as soon as his weak knees left the sawdust floor in their slow painful uprising.

"Aw, get the ambulance," fanned Miss Yockley loudly, chewing gum. "That referee can't count past 8."

"What's the matter with that poor man?" said Daisy, all sympathy.

"Oh, nothin'," said Miss Stella. "Wants to have a little sleep, I guess. Oh—at last!"

For the referee, concluding his measured count to 10 while the fallen man still rested on hand and knee, had turned brusquely, caught the gloved hand of the other fighter, and thrust it up in the air in token of a win.

"O' course he's the winner," snorted Miss Daisy's companion; "they should never have took that other fellow away from his sandwich job. He can't stand up without he's got a couple of sign-boards to brace him. . . . But look, honey; here's our Nicky. Always inspects the ring like that, so's the boy that goes down in front of him within the first ten seconds after Nick gets in action, can't claim he slipped on a banana peel."

Daisy withdrew her eyes from their sympathetic following of the limp victim of the second preliminary bout, as the latter's seconds, a shoul-

der under each of his armpits, escorted him wabblingly back into the wings.

As she looked again at the roped square, she saw that in the interval there had hopped into the enclosure her partner of the dance in the park pavilion, Nick Cluett, a boxer of the kind that is born and not made. Hither and thither, slim and lithe in his gay-colored bath-robe, he moved—stamping the floor here and there with a testing heel, trying the tautness of the ropes, saying nothing, but noticing everything.

“They can’t never put nothin’ over on Nicky,” commented Miss Yockley, more than generous with her negatives when she wanted to be emphatic. “They used to lay traps for him, when they seen how he was comin’ on in the boxing game—for some of these here so-called ‘sports’ is the meanest, trickiest skates this side of the Hot Place. But after Nick showed up a couple o’ them kind of low-down promoters, by bawling them out right in front of the audience, so’s everybody could get a line on them, they let up on their monkey-work. They don’t try nothin’ now; but Nick, he always gives everything the onct-over, to be on the safe side.”

Apparently everything was in order in the present case; for Cluett, his hands thrust in the pockets of his bath-robe, stepped to the centre of the roped space to speak to the referee and to Mas-

terman, his manager. Facing him, on the referee's left, stood the man who was to be his first opponent—a stocky fellow, whose calves, showing underneath the frayed edge of the old dressing-gown he wore, were more those of a football-player than a boxer.

“Nothin’ but a big ox,” said Miss Yockley, with a sniff; “Nick’ll play with him a little, and then push him over. The gink will have some bother fallin’ down, with them size feet. Maybe he’ll go to sleep standin’ up. Funny things happens in the ring sometimes, kiddo.”

In a moment or two, the fighters stepped back to their corners, threw off their wraps, and stood forth in abbreviated trunks. It was seen that the build of Cluett’s opponent bore out the promise of his calves. He was heavy-muscled and broad of chest; thick-necked, and with a hard-looking chin that moved to the chewing of gum.

About the physique of Cluett himself, as he stood at ease, his arms lightly hanging, there was nothing remarkable, except that one shoulder seemed to be a little lower than the other. His muscles flowed along his limbs instead of standing out in knots and ridges. Standing unposed, with his perennial smile and his almost sleepy expression of eye, he looked like a somewhat indolent schoolboy, about to take a dip in a peaceful swimming-pool.

"That big thing over in the other chair will hurt him," said Daisy, anxiously; "why don't they make the big fellow take somebody his own size?"

"Don't talk," said Miss Yockley, briefly, "just sit still and watch. It ain't our Nick that's going to get hurt, honey."

But Daisy exclaimed aloud, and even the confident Miss Yockley herself almost winced, as Hobday, the big man, after a bare touch of Cluett's glove in the customary preliminary handshake, struck upward immediately and without warning. As the quick treacherous upper-cut shot toward Nick's chin, Bob Masterman, who could move with a marvellous quickness for all his avoirdupois, when occasion seemed to demand speed, jumped up from his seat and thrust his head through between the ropes, ready to shout his protest to the referee.

But, before Mr. Masterman made a sound, a glove, at the end of a slim smooth-muscled arm, waved him away with a backward gesture. Nick Cluett, untouched, slid his manager a corner of a smile as he stepped lightly backward, just far enough to be missed by Hobday's left, which followed that gentleman's unsuccessful right in a brisk second try for Cluett's jaw-point. Nick's guard was languidly low, and on his face was an almost dreamy look which a group of Hobday's

backers in the front orchestra seats evidently took for an expression of daze; for, "Finish him, Jim! He's all yours, boy!" they yelled lustily.

Bob Masterman stole a look at Cluett's face. In the centre of the never-changing smile, he saw the mouth-corner drawn up in a dry, calculating way. The manager's momentary flicker of anxiety passed. He leaned back, folded his arms, grinned, and waited.

Jim Hobday grew more aggressive every moment. The round was three-quarters over, and he had practically had the ring to himself, except for a gliding thing like a shadow, which eluded his fists by so little each time he swung that at every lunge he grew more encouraged, although he hit nothing.

"Come on—fight!" he growled, bull-like.

Mr. Cluett's smile deepened a little, and his lips moved. "Say when," were the words they framed.

"When?—why, right now!" roared Hobday, loud enough for the group of his backers to hear.

Mr. Cluett obeyed immediately. It was difficult for the eye to register the movement he made; but to those at the vantage-point of the ringside, it looked as though he doubled under Hobday's guard and then straightened up, all in one movement like a snake striking.

Hobday's knees were seen to sag. His gloves

dropped on Cluett's shoulders, half as though caressing his opponent, then slipped limply off. His whole heavy body collapsed, like a wet mattress.

"Ouch!" said Miss Yockley, feeling her chin. Then, glancing sidewise at Daisy, she commented, "Well, kid, I suppose you feel easier now, eh?"

"W-what did he do to him?" said Daisy, a little breathlessly; mixing her pronouns, in her marvelling.

"Oh, nothing," said Miss Yockley, ironically, "nothing at all. Only sent that big bovalapus off to Dreamland, on a through ticket, with one swipe. That's all!"

After Mr. Hobday, in an only partially recovered state, had been removed, and the hubbub of comment among his backers in the orchestra seats had subsided, there came a lull. Mr. Cluett sat in his chair in the corner of the ring, nodding and occasionally replying briefly to some remark made by the chatting group that surrounded him. From back in the wings came presently the sound of argument and protest; and, after a moment, a hale person in striped trunks shot into view as though he had been playfully pushed. With one sheepish glance toward the audience, however, he turned about and beat a retreat.

"You see," explained Miss Yockley, to Daisy, "they put their best man up first; and now that

the others has seen what Nick done to him, you couldn't coax 'em into the ring with old cheese. It looks to me as though everything's all over for to-night. Wait, though—here comes the spieler. Let's hear what he has to say; then we'll go around and see how soon Bob and Nick will be ready to come away."

"Ladhies and gentlemen," said the announcer, coming to the edge of the ring, "I regret to announct that, owing to the factth that we are unable to secure anodther oppon't in answer to Champeen Cluetth's challenge to any fighter of any weighth—"

At this point the speaker paused. A young man, in an automobile dust-coat, unbuttoned—showing that he was in evening dress and had evidently just arrived from some dance or other function—had hopped into the ring and tapped the announcer briskly on the arm to attract his attention. For a moment, the two held rapid conversation; then the young man in evening dress slipped under the ropes and disappeared again into the wings. The announcer, stepping to the very front of the stage and raising his voice so that he might be heard above the creakings of dispersal which already sounded in galleries and pit, said:

"If there are any presentth who may wish to remain a little longer, I am gladdh to be able to say that a certaint young man-about-town has

agreed to meet the champeen in a boutth of four three-minutth rounts. As the stranger wishes his identity to be concealedh—for reasons of his own—he will appear in the ringk masked.”

“Masked!” commented Miss Stella Yockley, “now, what’s this they’re trying to spring on us, I wonder. Well, anyway, they can’t put nothin’ over on Nick. He’s in training to-night, and the Devil himself couldn’t trim Nicky Cluett in four rounds. There ain’t a fighter living could do it—no, sir, I don’t care who he is.” And with these words Miss Stella cast a devoted glance toward the corner of the ring where Mr. Cluett, still chatting unconcernedly, had drawn his bathrobe over his shoulders as a sign to the unknown to hurry up, if he wanted a chance to land a “haymaker” on a fighter whose time was money.

He had not long to wait. A young white-limbed fellow, with a pompadour of stiff hair rising above the black mask that covered him from mid-forehead to just above his mouth, vaulted over the ropes into the ring, and took the stool in the opposite corner to that in which Cluett stood. There was something about the lines of the stranger’s mouth and chin that seemed to Daisy vaguely familiar.

After vainly trying to remember where she had seen similar features before, the girl turned her

eyes toward the corner where Cluett had just sat down on the stool.

The champion, his elbows on his knees and his head leaning forward in its customary attitude, was looking at his latest opponent with a certain interest. Whether it was that the mask piqued his curiosity, or that there was something in the build and agility of the unknown which indexed prowess, was not evident to Daisy; but Miss Yockley murmured, half to herself:

"Sa-ay! Watch Nicky prick up his ears. He sees something—I don't know what it is, but I know he sees it."

As the gong sounded for the first round and the two got up from their stools, it was evident to the professional eye that Cluett's new opponent was, at any rate, more nearly his equal than the ill-fortuned Mr. Hobday.

"Say!" Miss Yockley's tone thrilled with reluctant admiration, "did you notice the footwork of that boy? . . . No, you don't, Mr. Mask . . . Yes, you did, too! Sa-ay, you better watch that lad, Nicky Cluett!"

The last three ejaculations as the masked fighter tried for the head and—marvel of marvels to Cluett's admirers!—landed. Landed lightly; but landed, nevertheless.

As this happened, there came a hush of conversation all over the house. From boxes and orches-

tra circle, and gallery and balcony there sounded, as it were, one simultaneous creak as the audience leaned forward in their seats.

Nick Cluett was still smiling the smile that had never been known to leave his face, even in sleep. But, otherwise, his whole demeanor had changed. His arms, instead of swinging careless and indolently half-crooked, at his sides, were raised in his low impassable guard. His back, straight from hips to shoulder, leaned a little forward. The head was bent in his customary fighting pose, forehead out and chin in.

“‘Watch’, was what I said,” Miss Yockley, gloved hands clasped together with feminine tenseness under her chin, breathed, to everybody in general, “and I hope you’re watching, for th’ sake of what you’ll miss if you ain’t.”

The champion was following the stranger around the ring. The masked man, with light his-sings of his shoes on the canvas floor, backed at exactly the same pace, carefully avoiding corners, seeming to know where he was by instinct and without the necessity of what would have been an instantly-disastrous look over-shoulder. There was neither blow nor feint. Sometimes the gloves of the fighters touched, but the impact was feather-light and without audible sound.

Then Cluett struck. It was not like a blow—it was more like a shot. That is to say, one saw

nothing of the travelling fist: merely noticed the effect, in a red which grew between the stranger's lips, until it ran down in a long thin trickle over his bulldoggy chin.

"Gosh all jew's-harps!" monologued the tautened Miss Yockley, who did not seem gratified, "Nick missed him. That was meant for the point of the jaw. Would have been a K. O., too, if it had gone where it was looking. But ou-wouch!"

This last as the masked man's shoulders, gleaming white under the electric arcs, see-sawed flashingly. With apparently no visible reason for the movement, Nick Cluett's head rocked. The gong sounded, closing Round One.

"Jiminy!" Miss Stella said, "watch Bob!"

For Mr. Masterman was rushing to and fro, as the saying goes, "like a hen on a hot griddle". Talking and gesticulating to the referee—dashing over and shaking his fist in the face of the masked man who leaned back calmly in his stool while his seconds sponged his mouth—then hurrying back and whispering like a soda fountain in the ear of the champion, who reclined against the ropes that stretched behind his seat, restoring himself by deep inhalations and smiling crookedly at his manager's ecstasy of anxiety.

"That mask has got to come off!" Bob Masterman yelled, dashing over again to the referee, "or out of this comes my man. He can fight anything

with a face on, but he ain't used to pounding away at a mask."

"Why don't you mask your man, then?" demanded one of the stranger's seconds, who both also wore masks, one red, one black; "That will even things."

"Mask nothing," grunted the monosyllabic Mr. Cluett, sitting up in preparation for the gong; "Beat it, Bob. Keep shirt on. 'M all right."

Round Two commenced with the house, crowded from orchestra pit to gallery, watching in a silence unbroken except for an intermittent creak or cough. Even the light sound of the fighters' shoes on the ring-canvas was audible in seats half-way to the back of the big auditorium. Mr. Masterman, fists clenched in the side-pockets of his coat, feet squared aggressively on the floor, face thrust forward, watched the movements of both men with as much intentness as though he were a kind of auxiliary referee. Miss Yockley, sympathetically reflecting Masterman's moods, had lost her nonchalance. Her mouth half-open; her hands locked together and thrust, knuckles up, under her chin; the whites of her eyes showing in a gawky stare: she watched Cluett let the second round go by with only one light left swing to the neck, countered immediately by the masked man with a lightning right which made Nick shake his head and rub the thumb of his glove across his

nostrils. Neither blow did any noticeable damage.

Just before the gong called the boxers to their feet for Round Three, Nick Cluett, leaning back from the flicking towels, beckoned his manager and whispered in the latter's ear, afterwards giving him a whack on the shoulder with his glove as at the conclusion of a joke. Mr. Masterman was seen by Miss Yockley to brighten, and to resume his seat with something very like a smile.

"Clubs is trumps, huh?" Miss Stella relaxed from her nervousness a little to remark. "Well, all hands is glad it ain't spades, brother."

The climax of Round Three came just at its conclusion, after an exhibition of "footwork" that kept the audience clapping. From sparring at long range, the fighters, as though in simultaneous response to the same idea, jumped in close. Their work was so rapid that only those in the front ringside seats saw the terrific jab, all the power of shoulder and torso behind it, with which Cluett tried for the jaw-point, missed by a hair's-width, and stepped back with blood streaming from a contusion, half-cut, half-bruise, above his eye, where the stranger had countered, rapid as rifle-fire, before he could move out of range.

During the rest between Rounds Three and Four, it became almost necessary for the half-crazed Mr. Masterman to be put out of the ring by main force, as he pushed in, caught Cluett by

one arm, and tried, in spite of the expostulation of the referee, the reporters, and those in the adjoining ringside seats, and the grinning resistance of Cluett himself, to haul from the ring the champion whose laurel crown he regarded as now no more than perched precariously on the very edge of Nick's scalp.

"Come on!" he said, tugging redly and furiously; "he won't take off his mask, and this bout should have b'en off two rounds ago. Come on—out you come!"

"Don't make me smile, Bob," observed Mr. Cluett, wryly but tolerantly, as the seconds, working on the cut over his eye, made it smart momentarily with the caustic they were using to stop the blood; "my lips are cracked. Ta-ake it easy. Leggo now—leggo!"

There was no opposing the note in the last word. Mr. Masterman, grumbly releasing the arm he held, stepped back through the ropes.

"All right," was his final shot; "it's your funeral, Nick."

"There ain't goin' to be no funeral," said Mr. Cluett, "didn't I tell you to keep your shirt on. Have I ever fell down on a bet, th' whole time you've knew me? Have I?"

"Well," retorted his manager, "all I know is, you're pretty near due to lose on points, unless you can make this last round all yours."

Nick Cluett merely turned away his head, having said enough—for him. As the gong sounded for climactic Round Four, both boxers, with the “bluff” of the ring, sprang to meet each other as though it had required ten men apiece to hold them back till the moment came. For all this business of haste, however, their gloves touched warily. A four-round mill is a very short one, even for two ringmasters like Nick and his opponent, to feel out a new antagonist in; and, though each knew points of the other’s “style” by now, each knew there was more to uncover and that it would be uncovered in this deciding round. The bout, so far, had been a clean and pretty one; and that the audience had developed no partialities was made evident by the way in which both men were cheered as they worked.

But in this last round it was Cluett who was especially marvellous. Right from the tap of the gong he was the aggressor. Round and round the ring he backed his opponent; giving the stranger never the chance to start, much less to land, a blow. But if the champion’s offensive was lightninglike and wonderful, the masked man’s guard was no less so. For, though Cluett’s glove landed in each case, it landed with its force broken by the elastic and elusive movement of the stranger’s head and torso.

"Easy, Nick—easy," spurted Masterman, though his eyes shone; "don't let him play you out, boy." Besides the pride he felt in his man's work, Bob Masterman knew that if Cluett kept this overshadowing gait to the end of the round, he would win hands down on points.

"Soak him, Nicky!" cheered the barometric Miss Yockley, wriggling with delight; "he's ran short o' tricks. He's all yours."

Daisy's sympathies had swung, quite without conscious mental volition, to the side of the masked man, as she saw that he seemed to be losing. Her eyes never left his face, as she watched sympathetically for the spreading red stain that should show broken skin. But, although the stranger's cheek below the black edge of the mask, as well as the sides and even the point of the jaw, were dull red where Cluett had landed — but landed as on something pneumatic—there came no livider crimson. Instead, Daisy saw come on the lips a smile. The smile was still there when the round ended with the masked man skilfully covering from a shower of taps that, though his guard broke, or lightened them, landed as true as the arrows of Locksley. Nor had the smile on the bulldoggy lips faded when, upon Cluett being declared winner of the bout, the stranger, followed by the commending cheers of the crowd, vaulted out of the ring over the ropes, and was gone. A

moment afterwards, there came the great, smooth snarl of a high-powered auto springing from the curb outside.

"Some big bug amateur," observed Miss Yockley, shrewdly, "hence the mask. Must have slipped on his auto-coat over his fightin' togs, to get away that quick." Them seconds with the masks on was likely college chums, or something. But, O teaberries! didn't he cover up from our Nicky though! I never saw a man could do like that before. . . . Come on, now, kid: let's get out in our car and wait for the boys. There's something," Miss Stella added volubly, as she rose, "that I don't quite understand, about that last round. Didn't seem as if the other man was trying; he never started one punch. Can't get nothin' out of Nicky on it — he's too close-mouthed. But Bob'll tell us."

It was not long after the two reached the automobile, standing long and alert by the curb where Mr. Masterman and Daisy and Miss Yockley had left it when they entered the theatre, till they saw the two men approaching. Mr. Cluett had just had a shower-bath in one of the dressing-rooms, and his hair showed wet and black around the edges of his cap. He was silent, but the perennial smile was in its place. There was not a bruise visible to Daisy, except the slight skin-break above his eyebrow. She scrutinized the champion with

a new, but not exactly intensified interest, as he slipped into the tonneau beside her.

"Well," he said, taking off his cap and running his fingers through his thick damp hair; "how's our little one? All here?"

Mr. Masterman, getting in by Miss Yockley on the front seat, swung his head around as he took the wheel.

"Some boy with the mitts — eh, what?" he grinned at Daisy. Miss Yockley caught the speaker by the ear, and promptly turned him eyes front.

"I'm *here*," she said, as she extracted a fresh piece of gum out of her handbag, "not *there*. Now, who's this buck with the Hallowe'en fixings, Bob?"

"I know," said Mr. Masterman, "but I'm forbidden to say."

"Well," observed Miss Yockley, as her teeth industriously kneaded her new slice of gum, "he pretty near threw a monkey-wrench into our machinery, whoever he is. Bar all masked fighters after this, is my little word of advice to you boys. Eatin' snowballs ain't fattening, and it wouldn't even be nice for a change. . . . But who was he, Bob? Come o-on; we're all friends here."

Mr. Masterman shook his head. But, at the same time, the eyelid next Miss Stella, answering a brief contraction of Bob Masterman's cheek,

swiftly closed and opened in a movement that the others did not see.

"Precisely, brother," acknowledged Miss Yockley; then, turning toward the two in the tonneau, with her plump arm laid along the back of the seat, she said, with a rapid change of subject;

"Here's a couple that ain't speakin', Bob. What does a fellow do in a case like that?"

"Run for the Doctor," suggested Mr. Masterman, over his shoulder. "Where do you want to go, Nick?"

"Home, James," said Mr. Cluett. Then, as he roused himself from an attack of pensiveness, during which he had been making little unconscious passes with his arms, accompanied by swift light jerks of the shoulders he added thoughtfully, "Some class to that fellow, Bob."

"Class is right," said Mr. Masterman; "but no more masks for us, boy. Never again."

"Oh, I don't know," pondered Nick Cluett; "I'd fight him again, mask and all, just to learn something about that style of guard he's got. Fightin' them other dubs will never get me anywhere: it's too much like bowling."

After turning a few corners, the car was halted near a big seven-story, midtown block, the ground floor of which was occupied by a sporting goods store on one side, and a great bright-windowed restaurant on the other.

"Hail, hail, the gang's all here!" said Mr. Masterman, bustlingly, clicking open the fore and tonneau doors of the automobile; "everybody change!"

"Order up a little supper, Bob, after you run the car in," said Nick Cluett as, leaving Masterman to take the car to the garage at the back, he followed the girls to the elevator entrance.

The elevator rose slowly. Daisy, standing with her arm through that of the nonchalant Miss Yockley, felt her nerves tauten as though they were being wound with a key. Her wits sharpened automatically to meet the situation into which her daring had projected her. The rapid, virile beat of her blood made her tingle pleasantly, and brought a color into her cheeks that caused the ever-observant Miss Stella to remark, as they stepped out of the elevator:

"Say, kid, we got to get a picture of you."

Cluett thrust a key into the shining brass lock of a door halfway along the corridor; swung it open; and, glancing inscrutably sidewise at Daisy, motioned inward with his hand. Daisy, following close on Miss Yockley's heels, found herself in an apartment with two wall-beds that, hooked up into place, showed as nothing but a pair of full-length mirrors, with dressing-brackets at either side that served as legs when the beds were let down. Gus, the janitor, had tidied the place. Can-

vas shoes and sweaters had been gathered into the clothes-closet. The big porcelain tub in the bathroom had been polished until it shone white and clean. The green carpet had been gone over with a vacuum cleaner. The "pillow" gloves of boxing practice had been arrayed in an orderly manner on the top of the chiffonier.

The room was a large one, with two big airy windows. On the walls, kalsomined in light green, were pictures of fighters of all weights; a wire card-rack with photographs of girls; and prints, some framed and some unframed, of the "September Morn" type. An open door showed an inner apartment, with red burlap, plate-rail, round dining-table, and buffet; and beyond this was a small kitchen, into which Miss Yockley, who had unpinned and tossed aside her hat, bustled, and lit the gas under a copper water-kettle. Almost simultaneously, a bump came at the hall-door, and a grinning restaurant-waiter entered with a huge nickeled tray, whose savory-smelling victuals were hidden under a white linen cover.

"Right here, George!" sirened Miss Stella, posting herself by a side-table in the dining-room.

On the heels of the "little supper" came Bob Masterman, who shook a finger playfully at Daisy as he slammed the door on the vanishing waiter and cast his hat into a corner.

"This way for yours, Bob," came Miss Yock-

ley's voice, above the clatter of silver and bump of dishes laid out on a table-cloth; "come along, and get your coat off, and massacre these chickens. Can't you see you ain't wanted in there? You need a house to fall on you, you do!"

Mr. Masterman sighed like a typhoon, but obediently passed into the dining-room: pausing, ere he closed the door after him, to stick his face through the aperture and close an eye at Daisy.

"Beat it, Bob," said Mr. Cluett, absently.

"I guess I'll go and help," said Daisy, looking brightly cornerwise at her companion, who still seemed to have the fight on his mind. Nick Cluett at this, came out of his half-reverie and, crossing the room, sat down beside Daisy. He looked at her a moment in a queer way; then put out a strong hand, with black hair growing along the finger-sinews, and laid it on hers. Daisy noticed that the middle knuckle looked purplish.

"Well, m' little girl," he said, "how goes it?"

"What's happened your hand?" said Daisy; putting her head on one side, softly touching the discolored knuckle, then looking at him through down-held lashes.

Cluett glanced down casually. "Oh, nothing," he said, "just a little accident. But you ain't told me how *you* are, yet."

"Oh, I— I'm sick in bed," said Daisy, putting her free hand up to her face, and bringing two

dancing irises to bear on Mr. Cluett through the fingers of it.

"You're a little devil," commented Mr. Cluett, inching over and putting his arm around her. Daisy's eyes, fairly coruscating with coquetry and resource, flashed down at the hand that pressed her waist. First she pretended to look at it from one angle; then from another.

"I don't like the looks of it," she said, "take it away."

"Do you mean that?" said Nick Cluett. The dark face, with its queer stationary smile and its eyes full of a warming light, came close to hers. Daisy waited dimpling till the rough cheek, bluish with its day's growth of stiff hair-stubble, almost touched her ear. Then, exploding into light quick action, she cast away the encircling arm and hopped to her feet.

"I'm going to help get the supper," she said; and, before Nick Cluett could stop her, whisked to the dining-room door and flung it open.

"What's bust loose?" said Miss Yockley, who was making coffee.

"Frisky little thing, you!" observed Mr. Masterman, rolling up his sporting paper, and playfully threatening Daisy with it.

"Turn off the gas, Bob," commanded Miss Stella, "and don't have so much to say. Come along, Nicky. Supper's on."

Mr. Cluett strolled in, and the four drew up chairs. There were three roast chickens, hot, carved up into handy "drumsticks" and slices by Mr. Masterman; "French fried" potatoes; a cut-glass dish of peach preserve; fruit cake; bakers' rolls; and an electric percolator filled with savory coffee.

"Some little lay-out," observed Mr. Cluett, who was hungry after his evening's "work-out". He stepped into the chair next Daisy's by tilting it and swinging his leg over the back to the seat.

"Yes: Bob done well, for once," said Miss Stella, "gener'ly, when he's ordering a supper, the only thing he can think of is 'poached on' and raisin pie."

"What have we got to drink, Stel'?" demanded Mr. Masterman, hitching his cuffs as he prepared to serve the chicken.

"Coffee," returned Miss Yockley, winking at Nick Cluett and Daisy; "we're gettin' ready for when the country goes dry."

"Well," said Mr. Masterman, who had paused aghast, but had recommenced to breathe freely as he had intercepted the speaker's wink; "I guess I can stand it as long as Stella can, anyway—and that ain't very long."

"You bet it ain't," admitted Miss Stella, going to the buffet and bringing back three bottles of

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champagne; "See what the milkman left us for the baby, this morning."

"Let it out, then, let it out!" said Bob Masterman, laying down his carving-fork and setting out glasses; "I'm as dry as the night before, boys."

Under Miss Yockley's deft offices, a cork popped promptly, and four glasses were filled in as many seconds.

"I guess we can let Nick off the water-wagon for to-night," said Mr. Masterman, "while we drink confusion to the Masked Man. But what's wrong with Prettiness here? Swore off?" This to Daisy, who had made no movement to lift her glass.

Daisy merely dimpled and shook her head.

"Somebody say something," interpolated Miss Stella; "Come on, Kid—if you knew the pain Bob's in, you wouldn't keep him waiting. Do you want some water in it—or what?"

"Water in it!" ejaculated Mr. Masterman, "Help! . . . 'Water in it?' she says, as though she meant it."

Nick Cluett, who, glass in hand, had been regarding Daisy narrowly, spoke out.

"Let up, people," he said, tersely; "she don't want it."

"Oh, dewberries!" observed Bob Masterman, mincingly. "Well, here's to the trimmin' our boy

Nick so nearly got—may we never, never be so near the cruel bread-line agen!”

Supper passed amid a continual “kidding back and forth” between Miss Yockley and Mr. Masterman, which speeded up as the champagne bottles emptied.

“Oo-aw!” said Miss Stella, fanning herself and rising at length, a little unsteadily, from behind her emptied glass and coffee-cup; “I feel like a breath of fresh air.”

“You don’t *look* like a breath o’ fresh air,” chortled her drinking companion; “you look like t-ten cents’ worth o’ tough luck, Stel. Get on your hat, an’ I’ll walk you ’round the block, little one.”

With this, the two passed into the front room. Daisy thought they were joking about going out, till she heard the hall-door slam behind them. Then she jumped up.

“Wh-why—have they gone?” she said.

“They sure have,” said Mr. Cluett, leaning back lazily in his chair; “but we should worry.”

“Will they be long?” said Daisy.

“Search me,” responded Nick Cluett; “They may go to a picture-show. Maybe they’ll slip into a vaudeville show. We don’t care—eh?”

Daisy looked out into the empty front room of the suite. A gramophone on a small table met her eyes.

“Let’s put on some music,” she said.

Cluett got up, and came over, and stood beside her.

"Not to-night," he said, looking down. The champagne had brought a kind of dull color to his cheeks and forehead. "What do we want with music, kid? Come on—let's be a little friendly, huh?" His strong lean arm slid around her waist.

It was then that Daisy lifted up her face, let all the coquetry pass from it, and regarded him with eyes that were straight and sober.

"Stop it!" she said.

For answer, the arm tightened about her. Nick Cluett leaned to kiss her.

"If you don't stop it," said Daisy, rigid in his arms; "you're no gentleman."

Cluett relaxed his arm a little. His queer-smiling face, with its keen eyes, slanted down towards her in concentrated, silent interrogation. Daisy's spirit of mischief tempted her to drop her eyes; but she managed to resist the impulse and to keep her features sober-expressed.

"You're not goin' to be friendly, then?" he said.

Daisy dimpled ever so slightly. "Not just now", she answered.

"Do you mean that—or don't you?"

"I mean it," said Daisy, simply; "not in here, anyway. Why can't we go out, and get a breath of fresh air, too, and go to a picture-show?"

Nick Cluett took his arm from her waist, reached for his hat, and opened the hall-door.

"Come on," he said, "I'll see you safe home, Kid."

CHAPTER XI.

THE FACE BEHIND THE MASK.

“WHO’S the boy?” said Daisy, over her shoulder, to Jean; as, glancing out of the window of the big Harrison kitchen, she saw, at the front corner of the house, a younger man get out of the car after the bulky Sir Thomas. “I thought all the visitors here were elderly men. There’s been no young ones at all since I’ve been here.”

“Ey?” Jean came to “keek,” resting a hand on the shoulder of the younger girl; “why, if it’s no young Harrison! Did I never tell ye Sir Thomas had a lad? Well, well.” Jean sat down again to her pea-shelling.

“Ay,” she pursued, as her rapid fingers stripped the split pods of their green kernels, “yon’s Harold Harrison. He looks like his father, an’ he talks like his father, and as to his disposection—well, I’m bound in fairness-like to say he’s a bittie of his good mither—just a wee wee streak, like the lean in bacon—pinched in between thick layers of Sir Thomas himsel’. The young-lad’s no so rough-edged in manner—the college has polished him on the ootside. . . . But I’ll say no

more: ye'll see him juist now, when ye serve the supper."

And when Daisy did see the young man—sitting with his knees crossed and his elbow on the edge of the table, talking to his father but not noticing the quiet, awkward mother at all—she almost dropped the tray she was carrying. For Harold Harrison and the masked fighter who had boxed four rounds with Champion Nick Cluett, were one and the same young man.

"I'd know that chin anywhere," said Daisy, as she confided to Jean the discovery she had made, "it's just like his father's. And his lower lip is burst, too, just where I saw Nick hit the masked fighter. He has a piece of red sticking-plaster on it."

"Mon, mon!" Jean was interested; "is that so, then? I kenned he was a boxer; and I suppose, as the Harrisons has the name of getting what they 'go after,' its no surprisin' he's won to the top. It's aye the way. He has everything—his money, his schooling, his place in society, his business chances—an' yet he'll no be satisfied till he steals the boxin' honors from a puir lad that has nothing but his gloves. Nick's a machinist; and, up till lately, when money from his matches commenced to come in a little, he's had to do all his training in the nicht-time; while the Harrison lad's had all day and all night, if he needed, to

make himsel' pairfect. . . . Ey, ey—it's the way o' the warld, lassie."

"He'll never beat Nick," some flash of vague enthusiasm warmed Daisy for an instant; then she added—boxing terms and predictions coming handily to her tongue after that chatty hour across the supper-table from the "sporty" Miss Yockley—"he'd never last twenty rounds, or even ten, in a finish bout. Nicky Cluett," Daisy concluded with feminine irrelevance, "is a gentleman. The other fellow would be afraid to fight him without a mask on."

Jean laughed. "He didna wear the mask to protect himsel' from fists, lassie. He wore it so naebody would ken him. That's why young Harrison's seconds was masked too. Ye see, the Harisons' footing in society is no that sure that they dare play tricks with it—as they wad be doing, they think, if it got oot that Harold met a professional boxer in a public theatre. Ey, Sir Thomas has won everything now but a place in society, an' he's bound he'll have that, even if it means havin' the whole family operated on. . . . But ye'd better serve the dessert, bairnie: the rattle o' the knives an' forks on the plates out in the dining-room sounds empty, as if they was through their meat."

As Daisy stepped into the dining-room, young Harold, at a sign from his father, paused in his

account of the boxing-match till the girl had collected the used dishes and withdrawn, as he thought, out of earshot. But Daisy, on her mettle, halted just outside the swinging door, and caught every word with her keen young ears:

"—And so, Dad, I took it easy in the fourth round. The only reason I went into the bout was, that I wanted to try myself out against this fellow Cluett, who is supposed to be pretty good—and is, too, as witness my lip (first time I've ever been hit since the days when I was a learner!) I didn't want to beat him," young Harrison, as if seeking sympathy with this un-Harrison-like sentiment in the proper quarter, glanced at his mother, "right in front of his own crowd. Besides, he'd have lost his deposit, which means quite a bit to him, and nothing to me."

"You done wrong, son," Sir Thomas Harrison thrust out his chin, and whacked his hand on the table; "Y' done wrong. Beat 'em! Whack 'em! Round 'em up! Get their money. Show 'em who's boss. I'd never have b'en where I am to-day, if I'd ever passed up a chance to hand a man a wipe on the jaw, when I had him goin'."

CHAPTER XII.

SAWN OFF THE OLD BLOCK.

THE big Harrison villa,—with its broad ostentatious drive, its unsightly smear of cement bridge spoiling the green dip in the lawn, its elaborate superstructure which told of contractors' supplies bought at a dealers' reduction—soon became familiar to Daisy from its concrete cellar to its attic that resounded, mornings, with the virile thudding of young Harold's punching bag.

"Don't you ever put anything on a shelf, or hang anything up, or turn anything off?" she demanded, one morning, as, coming down from the top floor with her broom, she passed the door where the heir of the house of Harrison stood in his dressing-gown, combing back his thick black hair before a mirror.

"Whence the query, fair one?" said Harold, playfully.

"Well," said Daisy, stopping in the doorway with the roses of recent exertion coloring her cheeks superbly, her eyes dancing in their bright challenging way, and her plump arms displayed to fine and not unconscious advantage as she folded them over the broom-handle which leaned in

the bend of her elbow; "one of your boxing-gloves was under the shower-bath, with the water running on it; and your sweater was on the floor below the punching bag, tramped in the dust——"

"There shouldn't be any dust up there," said Harold, easily; "What do you suppose we pay our little housemaids for? Uh?"

"Is that so!" retorted Daisy; "well, you'd better give orders for the wind not to blow, then; and you'd better have your father pull up that nasty concrete drive, where all the dust comes from; and——"

"See here! See-e here!" Sir Thomas Harrison's son jerked out, spinning on his heel and facing her; "what do you mean by talking to me like that? Who do you think you're speaking to—the chauffeur or the stable-boy? Get on downstairs, or wherever you're going, and don't have so much to say." Then, as the young heir of the place turned again to the mirror, he added in audible soliloquy, "dashed cheek! These infernal domestics are getting to think they can do and say what they please. Some of these days that cook and I are going to have a rumpus too. She chooses coolly to forget, and to keep right on forgetting, the instructions I give her about my food. —What! you here yet?"

"Yes!" said Daisy, looking at him with her

cheeks burning redly and her eyes fixed and bright; "I'm here yet—*Mister* Harold!"

"Oh, a-all right," observed the young man, sarcastically, throwing out his palm with an elaborate motion toward a chair; "won't you have a seat, Miss—er—er—Miss Housemaid?"

Daisy's long eyelashes described a flashing arc as she swept the crown prince of the dynasty of Harrison from head to house-slippered toe. Then she turned away. Harold Harrison, as he heard her shoe-heels tapping smartly down the back stairs, grinned at his reflection in the looking-glass.

"That's putting 'em where they belong," he said; "Some kid, though, be-lieve me—some kid!"

Jean, at the big cooking range, heard Daisy come into the kitchen and thrust the broom into its holder with a rap. Then there came silence, enduring for so long that the Scotswoman glanced questioningly around. Daisy had dropped into a chair, and was sitting in a kind of brown study, finger at lip and eyes looking ponderingly out of window.

"Now, now, lassie!" said the cook, kindly; "it's nae business o' mine, likely; but this is a big hoose, an' ye canna be through reddin' up the rooms yet, an' it's nearly eleven o'clock. Is ony-thing amiss?"

Daisy related her encounter with young Harrison.

"Ey, ey," Jean smiled grimly as the girl told her what young Harold had said about the cooking; "so he's no farin' quite as he wad at the meal-table, and would like a bit brush with me, would he? Well, I canna be aye getting' up special dishes for his lordship, so I may as weel prepare to receive him. Did he tell ye of the wee bit tiff we had ance before, him an' me? No; he didn't. Well, I'll tell ye, in a few words. He talked wi' his tongue, and I talked with the besom; and the interview juist lasted four minutes by the kitchen clock. He's no a bad lad althegither; but he needs a canny bit breakin' in."

"Well, I'm not going to bother breaking him in," said Daisy, lifting her chin, "he's not worth it."

Jean laughed. "Well, onyway," she said, turning again to her own work, "don't let him start ye broodin', so the rooms'll no be done when our good leddy goes over the huse. Ye ken weel she'd turn to and mak' up the beds hersel', sooner than raise a fuss. Lassie, lassie, speakin' about the Mistress, I'm sore worried. She's failed terrible this last month. I keep tellin' her to drink milk, but she canna keep it doon. She eats nae mair than yon dickie-bird—a great big strappin' wumman like she is—or was—too! If onything

happens to the leddy o' the hoose here—guid-bye Harrisons! It's only for her sake I'm bidin' here, at the wage I get. I've got a standin' offer o' half as much agen from Lady Frances Ware—Sir William Ware's mother."

At the mention of Ware's name, Daisy gave a little involuntary start. But she did not tell Jean that she too had an offer of a position in the household of Sir William Ware.

"I suppose ye've no heard," said Jean, turning a protruding skillet-handle out of her way as she reached up for the flour-shaker, "that the young lad here—Harold—is engaged to a girl o' what they call the smart set. He's a takin' lad in some ways; but he's got Sir Thomas's way o' looking at marriage. It's nae good, Harrisons thinks, unless it brings social advantage. Ey, the conquest o' society is uphill work for puir Sir Tom. . . . By the bye, Sir Thomas himsel' is one person that, if onything happened our leddy, would not miss her much nor mourn for her long. Ey, he blames her, like, for 'keepin' him back'—her, that made him!"

CHAPTER XIII.

A PLOT THAT MISCARRIED.

“**H**AE ye no mercy on yon phone, bairnie,” observed Jean, rolling cut-cakes at a side-table, an afternoon or so later, “skirlin’ itsel’ sick in the corner there. If it’s yon grocery-man, tell him from me he’s gone daft, an’ I’ll be changin’ oor custom if he’s no more canny with thae orders, like.”

Daisy came out of one of the moods of pensiveness into which she had been in the habit of falling, lately, since the junior master of the house had inaugurated his policy of “putting her where she belonged.” Skipping over, she took the phone from the hook.

“Hello!” she said; “Waghorn’s grocery?”

“Not this time, stranger,” said a dry voice at the other end of the line; “but you’ve got two more guesses, if you like.”

Two dimples sprang into view near the corners of Daisy’s mouth, and a fine blush spread right to where the receiver rested against her ear. “I doubt it’s no the grocery-man,” murmured Jean, glancing over her shoulder as she laid a wafer of light, white dough in the bake-pan that stood, larded and ready, at her right.

"One guess'll do," said Daisy, into the phone; "it's you."

"Correct," certified the voice of Jimmy Knight, the jitney-driver.

Then followed a conversation of which, though the half of it could not of course be heard from Jean's post at the dough-board, the ~~tenor~~ was plainly discernible in Daisy's registry of dimplings, and tiltings of the head, and teasing pauses; and the final softly-yielded, "All right, I will,—bye-bye," as she hung up the phone.

When Jimmy Knight had called her "stranger" through the transmitter, this had merely been humorous irony; for Daisy Nixon and the young man who had first piloted her to the Harrison house, and later to the dancing pavilion at the park, had seen each other at least once, and very often twice, each week since.

On the evening after the telephone conversation just mentioned, Daisy, as she walked in her brisk, virile way to the trysting-place under the trees by the stone drive-gate, wishing that housemaids could afford suits instead of having to wear waists and skirts, knew that she was going to spend the evening at "a friend's house"; but she did not know that the friend was Jimmy's married sister, Mrs. Tom Farrell. Nor did she know that Jimmy had, in advance, instructed Mrs. Farrell something like this: "Now, Bet, this evening you'll

have the chance o' your life to help little Jimmy pull off something. Clean up the suite—yes, yes, of course I know you always do have it clean, honey; but I mean, clean it extra good, to-night—and spruce yourself up, and see that Tom gets his semi-annual haircut and has a clean sweater on; and fix little Tommy up real cute. You see, it's this way: I'm going to bring a girl around with me to-night—the best girl in——”

“M'h'm,” Mrs. Betty Farrell had yawned, into the telephone, “go on—shoot. I got something else to do than stand with this phone to my ear, Jim, and listen to you rave.”

“You sure have, Bet,” Jimmy soothed; “I know that. Well, as I say, I'm bringing this girl around, and I want her to get the home idea. See?—the home idea! Then she'll be all ready for the proposition I intend to spring, on the way home——”

“Since when,” interrupted the practical voice at the other end of the line, “have you started your bank account, Jimmy?”

“Sa-ay, that's a nasty one,” Jimmy had protested; “what do you want to spring a thing like that on me for, Bet, when you know how I hate banks. I draw down twenty-five a week, as you know, and I'll slap on some accident insurance, and we'll rent furnished apartments——”

"Better wait till she says 'yes'," Mrs. Farrell had advised, as she prepared to 'hang up', "before you start counting your chickens. She may not care to take a chance on you. I know how I'd feel about it, if it was me. However, I'll do my best for you."

Jimmy, who was quite ready to admit any time that he was "no hand with girls," shoved his hat to one side, thrust his hands into his pockets, and spat aside as, waiting outside the Harrison gate, he saw Daisy approach along the gravel walk.

If he had come for her in the jitney, as usual, to take her for a companionable hour's ride up and down his round, as a "free" and welcome passenger, he would have felt at ease; for he had become used to that. But this waiting, with no friendly engine pounding away in front of him and no familiar steering-wheel to lean his hands upon, was enough out of the ordinary to have embarrassed Jimmy anyway, even without the mental consciousness of his deep-laid matrimonial plot, and the feeling he could not shake off that somehow Daisy might sense it prematurely and flee.

"Lo, stranger," said Daisy, softly, taking the words out of Jimmy's mouth, as it were. She was a little shy, too; but Jimmy Knight was too busy with his own perturbation to notice that.

"H'lo yourself," he responded, with something like gruffness, "and see how you like it." As they

dropped into step side by side, he added, with an inspired flash, "Lookin' kind of skookum to-night, us, Friend Nixon."

"I might if I had a suit on," Daisy said, in her forthright way, "but suits cost money."

"Never mind," Jimmy, in spite of the playful breeze abroad, strove to pull his new straw hat down more firmly on its elastic cushion of virile, curly hair, "you may have one, soon."

Daisy, who had not meant this at all, cast a quick side-glance at her companion.

"I wouldn't take a suit from you, if that's what you mean," she said, abruptly, flushing a little.

"There, now," Jimmy blushed an honest, vivid red, "I've went and made a break, first crack at the bat. Say, you do the talkin' from here on. I'll just listen. If I don't say nothin', I can't make nobody mad, can I?"

Jimmy Knight's married sister lived in a three-room suite, in an apartment block not far from the Commercial Hotel—that structure from whose windows Daisy had had her first view of the city's rooftops. As she followed her companion up the three flights of stairs, her mind reverted to that girl-wife she had seen from the hotel-window, hanging out a washing for three, and pinning the tinier garments in the centre of the clothesline.

"Come right in, people," invited Mrs. Tom Farrell, opening the door of Suite 30, as Jimmy,

smiling humorously aside at Daisy, knocked like a bailiff; "You're as big an ike as ever, Jim. If you've waked young Tommy up, you'll go in and put him to sleep again. Mind that!"

Mrs. Tom was a pleasant-looking girl, a year or so older than Daisy, with a pretty mouth and a few freckle-dots on forehead and nose. Her hair was as red as Jimmy's was brown. She led the way along a short vestibule to the living-room.

"Tom's in the bathroom, having a shave," she said, with a kind of under-glance at Daisy; "I couldn't budge him out of his chair till I told him Jim was bringing a girl around, and then you couldn't see him for dust. All husbands is tarred with the same brush. Don't you ever get married, Miss——"

"Miss nothin'," said Jimmy, as they entered the neat room, with its "surface oak" centre-table, and buffet adorned with a cut-glass vase (a wedding present) filled with flowers contributed by the park gardener, who had a suite in the basement; "friend of the family, didn't I tell you, Bet. Name's Daisy, and she is one."

Jimmy was more at ease, in this familiar precinct. As his sister took Daisy's hat and went to put it in the bedroom, the two callers heard her remark, vigorously, to some object in an invisible corner, "Go off to sleep this minute, you! The idea!"

But the object only responded, wakefully, "Unk Dimmy! I wanna dinka wa'r."

"You want a spankin'," said his mother, reprehensively, "and you're going to get it. Don't bring him any water, Jim—he'll have the city waterworks dry, if he keeps on. It's the only excuse he can think of, for keepin' awake."

Jimmy, however, was at the faucet, with a glass of water half drawn. Carrying this, he dove into the bedroom as his sister came out.

"Might as well talk to the wind," said Mrs. Tom Farrell, "as them two. Well, of all——"

This last as Jimmy reappeared, carrying a sleepy three-year-old who, supporting the tumbler with two hands that had hollows where knuckles should be, was quaffing with all his might. Jimmy Knight had had an inspiration, which he was not yet sure was not a blunder, to show Daisy how a baby "became" him.

To Daisy, in spite of its neatness, the suite looked rather small and dingy. This impression formed itself quite unconsciously, not as the result of deliberate glances about. Probably it was a wholly involuntary comparison of these small rooms to the big garish apartments of the Harrison house, to which her eyes had grown accustomed during the past couple of months. At any rate, the impression came and stayed. Jimmy, however, had no means of knowing this; and, as

he glanced around at his sister's handiwork, he winked his appreciation at Mrs. Betty behind young Tommy's head; and shaped with his lips this soundless but energetic sentence, "You're a winner, hon'."

Tom Farrell, Senior, came from the bathroom presently, stroking a long, new-shaven chin. His eyes were narrowed sociably, and his mouth, as he approached Daisy, was kinked up at the corners in what seemed to Betty Farrell's critical regard, almost an ecstasy of friendliness. He paused, with the hand of greeting half-outstretched; then, tetering his shoulders a little, glanced first at his wife, and from her to Jimmy, interrogatively.

"Somebody introduce me," interpreted his wife, with considerable warmth and sarcasm, "or I'll go crazy."

"Daisy, meet Brother Tom," interposed Jimmy, diplomatically, as he saw a flash of temper in the glance Tom Farrell darted at his wife. A husband of four years' standing will not endure being put out of countenance before a pretty girl.

"Howdy," said Farrell, promptly; grabbing Daisy's hand and half for his wife's benefit and half because of Daisy's dimples, squeezing it hard and long; "howdy, howdy? . . . Say, Bet, what's that kid doing out of bed, this time o' night? Don't

you know nothing at all? Get him back between them sheets, right away!"

"Put him to bed yourself, if you're so keen about it," Betty Farrell retorted, hotly; "it was Jimmy brought him out here, not me. Why don't you take a round out of Jim?"

"I said, put him to bed," Tom Farrell was losing his self-control as his temper rose, "and do it quick!"

"Come along, Boy," said Jimmy Knight, genially, speaking into the ear of Tommy, Junior; then winking at Daisy as he jerked his head in humorous apology toward the point where Tom and Betty Farrell glared at each other across the centre-table, "we'll go and pound our ear, son. We don't need a house to fall on us, to show us we ain't wanted, do we?" He got up, young Tom in his arms, and moved toward the bedroom.

"No, sir, ree!" Tom Farrell's long arm came out and scooped out of Jimmy's grasp the youngster, who started to cry; "it's got to be settled right here an' now who's boss of this establishment. I ain't goin' to let no woman run on me. Here, Bet—take this kid, and put him to bed like I told you!" The husband was now so far beside himself that he, for the moment, neither knew nor cared what impression he made. As he spoke, he held out the baby boy, who yelled and kicked vigorously.

But Betty Farrell backed away, letting young Tommy dangle from his father's outstretched arms.

"I don't have to take no orders from you," she said, putting her hands obstinately behind her back, "and I won't, not if you rave till you're blue in the face. I'll show everybody how much authority you have over me."

At this, young Tom felt himself set down hard on a chair. Tom Farrell, having thus freed his hands, hopped ragingly across the room and slapped his wife on the side of the face. Betty, true to the color of her hair, flared up, looked about for something to throw, and swept her hand with temper's wastefulness toward the cut-glass vase in the centre of the table.

"Hey!" Jimmy Knight reached across and rescued the vase; "you ain't mad five dollars' worth, surely, Bet." Then the brother got up and came around the table.

"Break away, break away," he said, casting a deprecating grin toward Daisy as he put one hand on his sister's shoulder and the other on Tom Farrell's chest, and pushed the two apart; "hit-tin' in the clinches is barred, boys. How about a little card-game, everybody? Bet and me will take on Daisy and you, Tom, and beat yous flat."

"Nothing doing," Farrell nasalled, closing his eyes and rocking his head from side to side in an

obdurate negative; "this here thing's got to be settled first. Let a woman get the upper hand of you once, an' you'll never get her back in her place."

"Aw, go on, Bet," Jimmy gave his sister a little coaxing nudge, "put the kid to bed."

Betty Farrell raised eyelids, nose, chin and right foot, and brought them all down simultaneously.

"I—wun't!" she said; "so there."

This repetition of her refusal, though not this time addressed to him, brought Tom Farrell's wrath again to boiling-point, and he reached across and cuffed her twice more. Jimmy Knight's hand, which was still resting against his brother-in-law's chest, pushed Farrell firmly back.

"Don't do that no more, Tom," he said, his face and voice sobering a little.

"Why not?" flamed Farrell, turning on him.

"Well," said Jimmy, "I can't stand by and see you do it—that's all."

Farrell grew hoarse and purple. "Well, come on, then," he frogged, "I'll take on the whole blamed family, and lick 'em with one hand tied behind me." With this, his arm shot out; and Jimmy, taken unawares, received the blow full in the eye. Farrell followed quickly with a second thrust; but Jimmy was ready, and the fist glanced harmlessly.

"I don't want to fight you, Tom," he said, guarding himself with fair skill, as the brother-in-law, shoving the table aside with a jerk of his hip, pursued the attack furiously; "All I say is, be reasonable."

"Reasonable, nothin'!" croaked Farrell, as he landed again, cutting Jimmy's cheek with his thumb-nail; "I'll learn you to keep out, next time."

Jimmy did not answer. His lips tightened a little. Farrell, breaking through his guard again, struck the fast-blackening eye which had received his opening blow. Thereat Jimmy, with a vigorous shake of his shoulders, dived in manfully. There was a brief scuffle; then Jimmy's sinewy fist twinkled up hard, at short range, and Tom Farrell went down flat on the floor and lay there.

"Now, then!" the voice was Betty Farrell's; but it was addressed to Jimmy, not to her husband, this time; "see what you've done, with your dirty fists and your meddling. You've knocked him out—maybe hurt him—"

"He's all right," said Jimmy, a little sheepishly, "I—I never meant there, he's stirring now, I——"

"Well, get out, then," Betty Farrell dashed over and nervously opened the door leading out of the suite into the corridor; "go on—get out!"

I don't want no more fighting in here. Go on—you, too," this last to Daisy who, however, was already at the door.

Jimmy glanced at Daisy as humorously as a man might who had one supremely black eye and a cheek all over blood.

"I guess p'raps we might as well," he said.

There was silence on the way down the three flights of stairs, and comparative uncommunicativeness on Jimmy's part until the end of the walk home was reached and the two stood under the trees just within the Harrison drive-gate.

Then Jimmy, clearing his throat with the air of a man who has made up his mind to say something or die, observed, "I—I got to tell you one blamed good joke, Friend Nixon, before you go in."

"What?" said Daisy.

"Well," said Jimmy, "I—gr-r-h'm—I took you over there to-night to show you a happy little home in a three-room suite. As she turns out, however, that'n ain't so very happy to-night, huh? All my fault, for hikin' young Tom out of his crib."

"Oh, well," said Daisy, "everybody fights, sometimes."

"Yes, that's so," said Jimmy; "Yes, that's—that's so. But I—I—"

"M?" said Daisy, feeling something in her

companion's cadence that caused a soft little titillation of her nerves. She drew back further into the shadow as she felt her cheeks grow involuntarily warm.

"I know two of a kind—both of 'em easy-goin', I mean—that mightn't fight any more than onct a week, at the outside. Do you think you could stand for that, Friend Nix—Friend Daisy?"

Daisy drew a long breath, raised her face, and looked clear-eyed at her companion.

"I know what you mean," she said, glad that the darkness prevented cheerful, curly-headed Jimmy Knight from seeing the shine of her glance and the color of her cheeks, "but I can't. Not the way I feel these days. What happened over in the suite to-night didn't make any difference. But—well, I just can't. I'm a funny girl."

"You sure are," agreed Jimmy Knight; "how long did you say you'd need to think it over?"

"Forever," said Daisy, firmly, in spite of the beating of her heart.

"All right," responded Jimmy Knight, bravely choking down a certain obstruction that had risen in his throat, "I'll give you a day longer than that, so's it won't look as if I was rushin' you. Well—so-long, kid," he held out his hand.

"Good-bye, Jimmy Knight," Daisy gave him her hand, then drew it away gently, and ran indoors with tears in her eyes.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE GOLDEN STAIR.

SIR WILLIAM WARE put aside his book, covered a yawn, glanced up at the fireplace clock, which was about to chime nine; then, taking up the telephone which had been ringing with shrill iteration for a moment or two, casually laid his ear to it.

"Yes," he said.

"Sir William Ware?" vibrated the disk.

"Himself," responded Sir William, lightly.

"Well," said the voice at the other end of the line, "this is me."

"Eh?"

"Me."

"Ah." Sir William rubbed his chin in bewilderment; then he added, humorously, "Miss Me? Right, so far?"

"You have a short memory," commented the voice on the phone.

"You have chanced," said Ware, pleasantly, "upon a melancholy fact, madam. But may I not ask the identity of—Jove! wait a bit, though! My creaking wheels of recollection are beginning to revolve. . . . I have it! I have it! Miss Nixon?"

"Yes," said Daisy's voice, in a matter-of-fact way, "it is. I want to see you."

Sir William, at the speaker's naive directness, covered the transmitter with his palm and rocked in enjoyment.

"Bravo!" he said, then, uncovering the instrument; "the city hasn't spoiled you yet, my dear—has it?"

"I'm waiting near that cafe we were at before," said Daisy, "how long will you be?"

Something in the bare blunt words made Sir William hug himself in an almost boyish ecstasy. "I shall come," he answered, "on the wings of Hermes. They should bring me into your presence in from three to five minutes, young lady."

Daisy Nixon, after hanging up the telephone in the little candy store across from the Cumberland Cafe, had waited barely four minutes in the shadowed street just beyond the circle of light from the Cumberland's windows, when she saw a tall figure, cane in hand, walk briskly into that area of illumination. She crossed the street.

Ware, dangling his cane and glancing about enquiringly, saw her when she was half-way across the circle of light and facing the full blaze of it. Her bright frank eyes; her clear girlish fresh cheeks, on which a certain nervousness kept the tide of color changing its shape and margin; her round maidenly lines of bust and hip and

ankle: all wrought curiously and strongly and with a united effect upon Ware, as they had on that night in the Harrison dining-room when his attention, drawn to her casually by the accident to the soup-tureen, had changed at once to the heartiest interest.

Material absolutely fresh and new! Molten and virgin gold, not yet resistable to the stamp of the die!

"Well," he said, stepping forward hospitably, "how are you, my dear? Shall we go in?"

"Yes." Daisy stepped inside, deliberately unpinned and hung up her hat, and sat down opposite to the baronet at the table he had chosen along the side of the room. It was the same table they had occupied on their previous visit.

"Don't order much," she said; "I'm not hungry. I came here to talk."

"I think," said Sir William, "that talking will be much more enjoyable. I dined late, myself. Suppose we have, say, a few grapes and a little something to drink—an iced drink of some sort."

"Anything you like," said Daisy. She laid her hands on the table, caught her lower lip under her teeth with a shy gesture that was delicious to Ware, and said—quite plainly, and without yielding to that impulse of coquetry which had made him so brief with her on their previous meeting—

"Were you in earnest, that time you asked me to marry you?"

"My dear," answered Sir William, leaning forward, and extending his hand on the table until it was almost touching hers, "I made the proposal quite seriously and in good faith. I should not do otherwise. If you are still in a position to accept it, I make it again now."

Daisy looked across at the real eagerness in the fine eyes; at the face, with its skin cleanly and handsomely tinted under the few faint lines that indicated the light passage of the years; at the hand, smooth, white and gently masterful. Then she dropped her glance; but her voice was firm and her manner direct and frank as she answered him.

"I'll marry you," she said.

The white hand, with a strong and gentle pressure, came over hers, until her fingers were between the thumb and the heel of the palm. Something great and calm and authoritative seemed communicated with that touch. Daisy felt quelled and dutiful, but, best of all, as she lifted her eyes to his, she knew, less by his expression than by an unexplainable feeling within herself, that she could trust him. For in all essentials—so she read and knew calmly and surely that she read aright—he was, as Daisy herself would have put it, simply, "a gentleman."

"Thank you, my dear," he said, quietly, "I may say sincerely that I think we shall grow very fond of one another. Waiter!—here, please."

A dress suit glided forward and an obsequious ear leaned down. The waiter knew quite thoroughly what was "doing", although by the expression on his face during the conversation between Daisy and Ware, one would have thought he was working out in his head a problem in trigonometry.

"May I speak to the manager?" said Ware.

The manager, who had curly jet hair, an immense slope of white waistcoat, and an Alice-blue chin, appeared in exactly fifteen seconds.

"Have you," said Sir William, "a room where a marriage ceremony may be performed?"

The manager started a smile—but it got no further than a slight twitch in the eye-corners before something in Sir William's expression, though the baronet changed not a feature nor abated anything of his pleasantness—checked it.

"Yes, sir," the manager answered, voice and face returning instantly to business formality; "my office is at your service, sir, if you wish."

"That will do nicely, thank you," said Ware, rising; then to Daisy he said, as he offered his arm, "we will go there now—shall we?"

Daisy nodded, without speaking. Her faith in

him was as absolute as it was instinctive and involuntary.

As the manager bowed them into the office—a room of fair size—and, partially closing the door, made polite exit, Ware handed Daisy to a seat, and himself dropped into the swivel-chair before the manager's desk and took up the telephone.

“Hello!” he said, as he got his number; “that you, Mrs. Heathcote? Good evening; how's your neuralgia? . . . Splendid, splendid—I *am* glad to hear that. I say, is George about?”

Evidently George was at hand; for in a second or two the transmitter returned to Sir William's lips.

“That you, George? I say, are you busy? . . . Well, then, look here—could you slip around to the Cumberland Cafe, Osborne Street. . . . No, no, nothing about ‘hay’; Cumberland Cafe, you ass. . . . Yes, that's it—can't miss it—big, bright, plate-glass windows, half-way between Wardlow and Pembina. . . . I say, that's very jolly of you, old man. . . . Yes, I—we—are waiting. . . . Yes: I said ‘we’ . . . None of your bally business—that is, I'll explain when you get here. Make haste now, won't you? . . . Right-O!” Sir William hung up the phone and turned to Daisy.

“That was the Reverend George Heathcote, my dear,” he said, “rector of St. George's. Do you know St. George's?”

Daisy knew it—a big Episcopal church, with beautiful chimes, that made Sunday morning glorious. Right in the heart of the fashionable district. Ivied to the gables, with a mighty stretch of green ground about, bounded by a massive iron fence. And its rector was familiar “George” and “old man” to him who was shortly to become her husband.

Daisy Nixon’s heart bounded, and the color leapt into her cheeks. Three months ago, clad in an old smock of Jack Nixon’s and with a cuff administered by Mother Lovina smarting and tingling on her ear, she had waded, on an evening that she remembered well,—because it was her last on a farm—down to a miry cattle-corral to sit in the rain and milk four cows. It was in this moment, as the recollection of that final ineffably drab farm evening slipped into her mind, that Daisy formulated a certain daughterly resolve with regard to her parents—a resolve she was afterwards able to keep.

“I should explain,” said Ware, a touch of color in his cheeks and his fingers playing a soft tattoo on the desk blotter, “why I am doing things in this apparently hasty and stealthy manner. I have been expecting, for the last moment or so, that you would ask me to explain—and I may say that I consider it very sweet of you, my dear, that you have refrained from asking.”

"Whatever *you* do," said Daisy, "is all right. I know that."

"Thank you, dear child. Nevertheless, I shall explain. In the first place, I have a very head-strong old mother at home, who considers me, in spite of my 58 years—yes, my dear, I am 58—not yet grown up. With her, there might—I do not positively say there would, but there might—be difficulties. In the second place, and to be quite frank with you and with myself, this is the main reason for doing things on the dot, as it were—I know that young people are to a certain extent impulsive and that a great many things may happen in a short time, and I want you just as you are now, before anything can happen to change you in any way. I confess freely, my dear, that I really want you very much, and that it has been harder than you may think, for me since I last talked with you to keep my resolve to let you quite alone so that you might think this matter out for yourself. That, having thought it out, you have not been afraid or ashamed to voluntarily let me know your decision, is to me convincing proof—though short-sighted people may think this paradoxical—of that modesty which is to me your most precious quality."

Nervousness, more than he had ever imagined his socially-inured self could feel, was the cause of the latter half of this little speech of Sir Wil-

liam's being slightly formal. This marrying of a girl "of the people"—forty years distant from him and yet in her land of boy-and-girl—which had been easy enough to do in theory, in his study-chair, was a "bit of a pull" in actual execution. He had just finished speaking, when there came a knock at the door.

"Ah!" he said, getting up, "I shouldn't wonder if that's our friend. That you, George?"

"Yes—and I've jolly well run my legs off," exclaimed a voice, as a bustling and rather stout figure in clerical coat burst cyclonically into the room, dropped into a chair, and fanned itself with a flat-crowned black hat. "I couldn't get it out of my head, some way, that you are more in need of medical than spiritual attention at the present moment, Will. Now, calm yourself, old man, and let me have the whole story, and we'll examine the matter squarely and sensibly. I assume," the Reverend George glanced at Daisy, whose color was rising, "~~this is the young lady in the case.~~ Jove, Will, I thought you had more bally sense, especially at your time of life—I did, really."

Sir William looked at his ministerial friend open-mouthed; then, as the clergyman's meaning burst upon him, he sat up in his chair with a jerk.

"Now, look here, George," he said, as the swivel creaked at the vigor with which he gripped the chair-arms, "I should hate our forty-five years of

close friendship to end in fisticuffs. It will, though, I give you fair warning, if—if—what the devil do you think I've been doing, you ass!—Must I repeat that, of our mutual choice—quite unforced by circumstances, if I must say so baldly—Miss Daisy Nixon and I have decided to be married.”

Reverend George Heathcote, who was smooth-faced and good-looking, except for a few myopic wrinkles around his eyes, put on his glasses and looked keenly at Daisy, who met his glance with nose and chin well up, and brown eyes flashing aggressively.

“Don't look at me like that,” he said, after a moment, “please don't, Miss Nixon. I'm a blundering idiot, but I mean well—I do, really. Can you honestly, down in your heart of hearts, assert that you wish to marry the shelf-worn relic in the office-chair there? Can you?”

“Yes,” said Daisy, pugnaciously.

“Oh—very well.” Rev. George Heathcote, adjusting his glasses firmly, brought out from his pocket a black-covered book. Shuffling the leaves till he found the desired place, he closed the book, slipping his finger between the leaves; lowered it till it rested on his knee; and looked at Sir William, who looked back at him a little challengingly. After a moment of this scrutiny, the clergyman arose, went over beside his friend, and laid a hand on Ware's shoulder.

"Dear old man," he said, "I do want you to consider this thing very seriously. You've always been a bit of a boy, you know. I, of course, know the fancies you've petted about marriage—I always thought they were merely fancies, or I should have tried harder to reason you out of them. Now, is your mind absolutely, irrevocably, and after due deliberation made up? By the bye, have you thought of—your mother?"

Sir William Ware stood up, settling his coat about his fine spare shoulders.

"I have thought about everything—considered everything, George," he said. "I know you mean well, old chap," Ware, in turn, put his hand on his old schoolmate's shoulder, "but really, I don't care to discuss the matter any further, even with you. Besides, all this is, as you must understand, very embarrassing, for Miss Nixon." He turned to Daisy. "Come, dear," he said.

Daisy Nixon stood up; and, in the presence of two decorously expressionless figures of the cafe staff—the manager and one of the waiters—as witnesses, she was presently by brief and grave ritual united in the bond of holy matrimony to Sir William Ware, Baronet.

As the ceremony ended, and she stood awed and a little pale, Sir William approached and, very softly and tenderly, put his hands upon her shoulders and stooped to kiss her. He would have

kissed her forehead; but Daisy, lifting her face with an altogether sweet gesture of yielding, gave him her lips.

His countenance, upon which the girl's eyes had continued to look as it approached near to hers for the caress, had not shown, in its nearness, any grossness of line or texture, any twitching muscle betraying some unexplainable dark trait. It was masculine, thoroughbred, honorable-eyed and—clean. It was pleasant and thoughtful. Face and figure were full of quiet mastery, yet had no outward suggestion nor pose nor plebeian ostentation of “masterfulness.”

CHAPTER XV.

THE LADY OF THE HOUSE.

DAISY, in whose virile young body the habit of sound and healthy sleep was too firmly established for even an event so epochal as that of the previous evening to break her rest, awoke next morning, after a night of undisturbed slumber. A little clock, sounding one of the hours with chimes instead of the ordinary striking gong, drew her notice. The dial registered nine.

The first use she made of her opened eyes was to glance, with a thrill, about that beautiful pink bedchamber; a door at one end showing a little bathroom, tiled in clean and shining white, with folded towels on a glass roller above the long porcelain tub. The morning sun came rosily in through a curtained bow window, that had an alcoved seat piled comfortably with cushions. A fresh draught coming from another quarter drew her eyes toward an open way leading to a balcony, with straw matting, a hammock, and comfortable-looking rattan rocking-chair.

There was some uneasy feeling in the back, as it were, of Daisy's head. For a moment or two, she could not understand it; then, as she found herself instinctively glancing about the apartment

to see if there were any corners hard to reach with the broom, the solution of her sensation of unrest came. It was nine o'clock and she was still in mental habit a housemaid at the big Harrison villa. By this hour she should have had all the windows in the sleeping-rooms opened and the blankets and sheets turned back to air the beds.

Daisy laughed to herself, and snuggled back luxuriously on the deep soft pillows. Her mind resumed its office of recollection and ratchetted on over the events of the night before. The evening had been spent, by the rector's invitation, at his house, adjoining massive St. George's church. There had been a pleasant little wedding "dinner," during which Daisy had met a Mrs. Heathcote who had afterwards taken her off by herself and asked her a good many blunt and, as Daisy thought, rather intimate questions. She had met one Jessica Heathcote, too, a bird of slightly different plumage—a companionable, back-slapping girl, who sat on the edges of tables, or put her feet up on chairs like a man, while she conversed; haw-hawed and whacked her knee when she heard a good joke; and was in every way a person to banish misgiving and dolor and, unaided, to make things hum. Jess was coming over to see her early to-day.

"You'll need a bit of help, you know, young-

un," Jessica had predicted, "when you face 'Grandmammah'. Yes—rathah!"

After the little family wedding-supper at the Heathcotes', Daisy had gone home with Sir William in the rector's car. Everybody at the Warehouse had retired when they reached it, for the hour was well on toward midnight; and Sir William, after—as he jokingly put it, to Daisy—"smuggling" her up to this apartment, had pushed her playfully in, and with a squeeze of the hand and a whispered "pleasant dreams," had considerably departed to his own rooms.

The air that entered from the balcony was very inviting. Daisy could hear the whisper of ivy-leaves. Flower-breath came up and in from some hidden garden below. Fitful rattlings of a mower and the hiss from a hose-nozzle sounded on the lawn.

Daisy's garments—the white waist, the stuff skirt, the brown stockings, one with an incipient hole in the heel—lay over the foot of the bed, where she had yawningly cast them when she disrobed last midnight. They looked very cheap and poor and out of place in this lovely room; and Daisy pursed her lips a moment, and wrinkled her brows after a way she had, as she regarded them. But presently, with that little shrug of the shoulders that was her customary way of casting off trouble, she hopped out of bed, dressed up in the

old clothes—which somehow, as she fastened them about her handily, conveyed a comfortable at-home feeling—and, sticking a pin or two in her hair, stepped out on the balcony. Leaning her elbows on the rail, she looked down and about.

The Ware house and grounds were very different from the Harrison house and grounds. No concrete in evidence here—no artificial terracing—no stone garage. No evidence of money anywhere, except such as was incidentally shown by possession, in the costly residential section of the city, of these great broad grounds, with their natural swell and slope; their big trees, between which here and there a little footpath wandered wild; their plain white street-fence, twinkling afar through the shrubbery. The house was frame, ivied from the ground almost to the chimney-tops (ends of the green runners, as Daisy could see on an adjoining gable, ~~had climbed~~ right up on the shingles), and with verandahs everywhere. It was a villa for people who loved fresh air; whereas the Harrison house, for all its massive and costly ostentation, ~~was no more airy~~ than a prison. The object in the case of the latter was display, the manifestation of the Ware place, good-mannered reserve, with reasonable provision for comfort and health.

The Harrison house was like a striped shirt, a broad-check suit, a scarlet tie, with a blatbump

figure housed in them, thumbs in sleeve-holes, striding toe-out, gold chain-links dangling, diamond stud flashing, tongue blathering, along the main street. The Ware place was like one quietly-dressed and thoughtful, strolling in a grassy lane.

Down below Daisy was a tuft of shrubbery, and behind this the garden-hose was going merrily, with a sound like fat frying. A spray of water came out from a point near the base of the foliage; and, where it fell, the grass and the scattered coin-like yellow flowers glistened in the morning sun. These soft-petalled wild-flowers were the only manner in which gold or its effect was displayed on the Ware grounds.

Presently the nozzle of the hose came into view, and behind it the rubber tube emerged until Daisy could see a black-sleeved arm, with white cuffs turned back at the wrist. Then, following the arm, there passed into sight a statelily-moving, moderately stout, slightly stooped old lady, with a white lace cap pinned on her gray hair.

Lady Frances Ware, who, for more than three-score of her eighty-two years—ever since, in fact, she had become a member of the Ware household—had been an absolute ruler, possessed a face in which every lineament was almost mesmerically masterful. Beneath the silvered hair that on either side of its straight central parting, was

drawn back smoothly under her cap, a forehead, puckered in a Frontenac-like way between the brows, sloped up and forward. Behind her glasses her eyes, keen, dark-blue, and eagle-like, looked out level-irised. Her mouth was bent down at the corner, and, beneath the underthrust lower lip, the chin was gathered tensely.

Evidently she had that uncanny faculty, peculiar to those long habituated to directing a household, of instantly and by instinct detecting the irregular; for she was barely in view, before her eyes travelled up to the balcony where Daisy leaned. Lady Frances adjusted her glasses; looked hard at the girl a moment; then turned off the nozzle of the garden-hose, folded her hands across one another at a point just below her waistband, and glanced off across the lawn toward where the mower was clattering.

"Will," she said, "come here—at once."

The mower stopped obediently; and Daisy, who had drawn back a little, saw the tall figure of Sir William come into view between the trees. He was in his shirt-sleeves, and his neatly-cropped head was bare.

"Yes, mother," he said, as deferentially as though he were ten years old.

"Who," said Lady Frances, "is that—up there? Or do you know?"

Sir William, as he glancel up to the balcony

and saw Daisy, gave a little start. Then he nodded and smiled at the girl; and, appearing to square his shoulders a little, turned again to the old lady.

"That, mother," he said, simply and with a dignity equal to Lady Frances' own, "is—my wife."

The dictatress of the Ware household lifted her eyes again, and regarded Daisy for nearly three minutes. Then she faced her son, took off her glasses, and looked at *him* for a short period. As, at the conclusion of this survey, she inhaled preparatory to speaking, Sir William had an odd sensation of tingling down the backs of his legs, as in the days when his mother had prepared to supplement reproof with liberal administration of the tawze.

"Have you gone quite daft?" she demanded; then, with an imperious motion of her finger, she said, "Now, exactly what do you mean by this, Will? If you were not speaking seriously, I may tell you at once that I wish no trifling on such a subject. Now, answer me immediately."

"Well," responded Sir William, a little lamely, "we were married last night, mother—that's all. I don't know that there is much more I can say."

"I differ from you on that point," Lady Frances' voice was formal; "I think that there is a very great deal more to be said. I take it for

granted, however, that in a man of your years, this step was not necessary, or considered so, because of previous unwise conduct. Where did this affair take place?"

"In the Cumberland Cafe," Sir William said, redly as a lad.

"The Cumberland Cafe!" The old lady repeated the words slowly and with stress. "Will, I think you should be in a sanitarium—I do, really. Now, go up and bring that young woman downstairs at once. Meet me in the library with her. To say that I am astounded, and disappointed in you, would be to put it in the mildest possible way—the mildest possible way!"

When Sir William, his arm through Daisy's, entered the long drawing-room, Lady Frances had taken a seat near the window. The baronet led the girl over.

"This," he said, "is Daisy, mother. Dear—my mother."

"How do you do," said Lady Frances Ware, evenly. "Sit down." The words were plain, but without any inflection to make Daisy feel ill at ease. Lady Frances Ware, no matter what the provocation, never descended to the plebeian level of scolding or bullying.

As the girl took the high-backed chair by the window, a puff of the morning breeze bulged the great lace curtain, laying a fold of it across her

knee. Bending forward to release the curtain, Daisy, in the necessary glance toward her coarse black skirt, became for the first time acutely conscious of her clothes. She had always moved in circles where people thought of clothes as entirely indexing the person. If she had had on a fine dress at that moment, Daisy could have faced a queen unabashed.

But Lady Frances never even glanced toward her new-made daughter-in-law's dress. She was concerned completely with the girl's face. Without any ostentatious flourish of lorgnette, but simply and quietly and thoroughly, she studied it.

"You have a frank expression, at any rate," she said, half to herself; then, more directly, she added, "How old are you?"

"Seventeen past," said Daisy, as though to a schoolmistress.

"Ah!" said Lady Frances. "Very young indeed to be away from home. But the viewpoint as to that is, I have noticed, different in this country. Where are your parents?"

"At—at home," said Daisy, a little confusedly. She wanted to avoid, for the present at least, explaining that she had run away from home.

"Quite so," commented the old lady, a little dryly; "and where is your home?"

"Out in the country—on a farm."

Lady Frances seemed relieved. "That is very

satisfactory," she said, "highly so. There are—possibilities—in young people who have been brought up out of contact with the city. And you are only—how old?"

"Seventeen, ma'am," Daisy repeated.

"You must not, of course, say 'ma'am'. But externals can be attended to gradually. Do you care for your—for my son?"

"I guess so," said Daisy.

Lady Frances, for an instant, looked at her so freezingly that Daisy moved her knees uncomfortably.

"That answer," said the old gentlewoman, "pleases me less than anything you have said, up to this point. I had hoped to find more enthusiasm—much more enthusiasm. In fact, it will be quite necessary to convince me that you are frankly enthusiastic in this matter before we shall get along at all."

"Daisy," put in Sir William, shrewdly, "is non-committal by nature, mother. You yourself know that you prefer that to evasiveness or untruthfulness. We shall be able to reassure you . . ."

"I shall most decidedly expect to be reassured," said Lady Frances Ware. She rose energetically to her feet.

"You may go now," she said, glancing in Daisy's direction. "Return to your room until I have Ada look you up something to put on."

Will, I should like to see you again before you go downtown."

With these words, Lady Frances Ware returned to her duties among the flowers and hedges and shrubbery, in the fresh air that had brought her to past fourscore with full retention of middle-aged vigor in faculty and body. As she passed down the outer hall, she instructed the maid as to Daisy's attire.

"I think we shall go along very finely, dear," Sir William said as he went upstairs with an arm about Daisy's shoulder. "Now, as soon as Ada is through with you, I shall take you out for a spin—just our two selves. Can you drive a motor? No—then we'll have a lesson this very morning. It will be fine sport. . . And, by the way, talking of 'going out' suggests going away. Where shall we go, for a bit of a wedding trip?"

"No place—not just now," Daisy looked up, then set her head on one side, put a finger under Sir William's lapel, and dropped her lashes, "I tell you what I *would* like to do, though, sir."

"Not 'sir'," put in Ware. "Say 'Will'. And don't flirt, even with your husband. In the first place, it's bad form; in the second place, I won't have it. Now, what's this you would like to do?"

"I would like," said Daisy, "to go over to Harrisons' for dinner, on Sunday, with you."

CHAPTER XVI.

TAKING A REST.

BUT there was no "company" invited to the Harrisons' on the following Sunday.

On the preceding Thursday, which was just two days after the evening she was married, Daisy had an impulse to go and see Jean. By arrangement with the Heathcotes, no notice of the wedding had been allowed to get to the papers; and when Daisy, in a white dress, popped in through the kitchen door of the Harrison house on Thursday afternoon, all Jean knew was that she had mysteriously slipped out on Tuesday evening and had not been seen since.

Daisy bounced over to hug her; but the honest Scot drew herself up sternly, and put out a hand.

"It's no like ye," she said, "to traipze oot like yon, an' gie the good leddy no notice—and her on the broad of her back now, at death's door, too. I ha' made the beds mysel' and sweepit up, for-by my ain work, for twa fu' days now, to save her the worry of havin' a stranger aboot, in her last hours."

"Last hours!" exclaimed Daisy, her breath catching, in the impulsive wave of self-reproach

that swept over her, "Is she—dying, then, Jeanie? Why, I—"

"Ay," Jean set her great knuckles against her hip as she stirred the broth she was making for the sickroom; "ye reckon of naeboddy so long as ye can please yersel', an' gang oot an' in, and come an' go, without a 'by your leave' tae ony person. . . . An' how come ye tae be here, all fettled up, in the middle of the afternoon? Are ye no workin'? An' if no, what are ye daein'? Say!" Jean turned, gripped Daisy by the shoulders suddenly and hard, and studied her with brows knit and eyes ablaze, "ye'll answer me *that* this minute—what are ye daein' for your bed an' board? If all's no richt, man! I'll tur-rn ye across my knee an' skelp ye, like a bairn! I'll save ye from the street, or I'll no leave a whole inch o' hide on your back!"

"Is the Missis dying?" Daisy repeated, tears now in her eyes.

"Ay," said Jean, shaking her, "an' all the greetin' in the warld'll no save her the now. But come! About yersel'! Oot wi't, I say!"

"Oh, I'm all right, Jean," said Daisy, still thinking about Lady Harrison, "I'm married . . . Say, can I go upstairs with you, when you take up her broth, and see her?"

"Married!" Jean sat, almost stumbled, into a chair behind her. In this position, she stared at

Daisy for a moment; then murmured, half, as it were, to herself, "Lassie, lassie! ye're a mystery to me. I absolutely gie ye up, as I wad a conundrum book wi' no key. Wha's the lad? Yon jitney man?"

"No." Daisy dimpled a little.

"No?" Jean, her elbow on the side-table, leaned forward with renewed interest; "I thocht, now, it could be nane other than Curly Head Jamie. Well, then, ye've no done the impossible, I take it, and hookit Nicky Cluett, have ye? Man! if ye ha' got him, yon's a laddie will soon gie ye your fine hoose an' motor-car. He's drawin' in the siller with a hand-rake, like, these days."

"It's not Nicky," said Daisy, smoothing out her sash and putting her head a little on one side.

"Weel, ye might have set your cap for him, onyway," Jean commented, as she reached over and gave the broth a little stir to keep it from burning; "Baby Jock tells me it's common talk ye made a hit wi' Nick, you nicht at the dance. Wha did ye tak', then, if it wasna Nick? Oot wi't. Ye've fair got me on pins an' needles. Do I ken him?"

"Well, I don't know," said Daisy, protracting her mystery with a teasing delight; "may be you do. Yes, I think you know him. It's— it's—" Daisy leaned over, and said the name dramatically, right in Jean's ear.

The Scotswoman looked at her hard: sternness returning to every feature.

"I doubt ye been misconductin' yersel' after all," she said, levelly and coldly, "I kenned it when ye cam' in through yon door. Tellin' me a pack o' lies'll no improve matters—"

"I'm telling you the truth," Daisy asseverated, warmly, "I didn't think you'd go and insult me, Jean!"

The other eyed her doubtfully. "I'd fair loe tae believe ye, lassie," she breathed, "but the thing's impossible. It sounds like a story out of a book. Why, besides his money an' his social position, he's sixty years old, if he's a day—an' forbye, he's an ingrown bachelor. He'd ha' wedded long or now, if it had been in him to marry. He—he hasna offered to keep ye—that's not what ye mean, is it? But, no—I ken fine he wouldna dae that. He's an honorable man, Sir William Ware."

Daisy regarded Jean a second or two; then went over, sat plumply down on the elder woman's knee, and put an arm about her neck.

"Listen", she said, "and I'll tell you all about it, right from the start-off, when I left here Tuesday evening." And therewith Daisy did so. By the time she had finished, Jean's arms were about her waist, and penitence blended with the amazed, generous, unenvying delight that radiated from

the Scotswoman's harsh-lined but kindly-expressed face.

"Forgie me, bairnie," she said, as she laid her great palm around the girl's cheek; "but I—I—why, I juist canna find the words tae say what I think. I'm fair—fair tongue-tied. Fast married—and tō a laird o' lairds! Ey, ye bonnie wee thing, ye, bide till I buss ye," and the great arms, tightening about Daisy's waist, hugged her ecstatically. Then Jean set her free, rose up with vigor, and reached down a bowl, spoon and plate of crackers.

"Come!" she exclaimed, as she turned out the gas-jet under the broth, poured the liquid into the bowl, and went to the cupboard for a dessert-spoon; "if the good leddy's conscious an' no in ane of her bad spells, we'll tell her the news. A bittie o' gossip like yon's better than physic or food to a sick wuman. . . By the bye, here's a letter cam' for ye yesterday. Open it an' read it, if ye like, while the broth's coolin'."

The letter was from Mrs. Lovina Nixon, in answer to Daisy's first letter home, written under a daughterly impulse during one of Jean's "nights out", when Daisy was alone in the big Harrison kitchen. In her letter, the girl had asked for forgiveness and had hoped that "You and Pa are getting along all right, and that crops are looking good."

Mrs. Lovina's answer was somewhat grim and ominous. "I suppose," she wrote, "you think yourself mighty smart, taking off like that. I suppose you think it was kind of respectable, eh, to go away like you done, alone with a feller. I suppose you reckon your going to have high jinks in town there while me and your Pa milks all them cows, well you ain't. Your not of age yet understand, and your pa and me is coming right into the city to get you, one of these days and fetch you strait home, and if you don't get one tanning from your pa that you'll remember all your days, my name aint lovina janet nixon, so mind."

"Bad news, bairnie?" Jean enquired; as Daisy, sobered not so much by the letter as by momentary recollection of her past, stared down at the floor in a grave, pondering way.

"Oh—no," Daisy folded up the letter and slipped it into the bosom of her dress, "not exactly. Is the broth cool now, Jean?"

"Ay," said Jean, picking up the bowl and the plate of crackers; "Come on. The Mistress is lyin' in Sir Thomas' room. I had him move his ugly carcass out of it, because it's the best-ventilated room in the hoose—the best o' the worst, like. He didna object, at least naething to speak of. He kenned fine I'd have taken the besom tae him without much encouragin' . . . Ey, what d'ye

think, now, I caught him sayin' tae her, one time when I came in to red up the room. He was standin' by the bedside, with his hands in his pockets and his feet spraddled out, in yon way he has.

"'We-ell, Marth',' he oppens up, in his big healthy blat, 'har yuh feelin'? Uh?'

"'Poorly, Tom, very poorly,' says the good leddy—puir soul!—in a faint-like voice.

"'Thaat's ba-ad,' he says, suckin' his teeth like somebody chirpin' tae a pair o' horses, 'but anyway, I guess, Marth', it's time you was restin' under the sod. You've done your share o' this world's toughin' it. You've airned the right to rest, if anybody hezz. Ever'thin' wurks furr th' best. Y'see that, don't yuh, Marth'-girl? Uh?'

"Juist then I cam up and gied him a push from behind. Ey, a bonny push! 'Get oot!' I says, chokin'-like. I was sae blind mad, I could ha' stranglit yon man, then and there, so I could. Weel, he went!"

The great muscles on Jean's arms were knotted into ribs and ridges like a man's; her chin was thrust out; her eyes were narrowed into shining slits. Her whole strong frame seemed to become a banked fire of indignation, as memory recalled that scene in the sickroom.

The door of Lady Harrison's room was slightly open as the two reached it. They were barely inside the chamber, when Jean, with an exclamation

thrust the broth and crackers down on a side-table and rushed over to the bed.

Daisy, following quickly, saw the Scotswoman, after glancing closely at the half-open eyes and laying her ear to the gaunt sunken chest, hastily remove the pillows from under Lady Martha Harrison's head, lay the scalp levelly on the mattress, and press down the eyelids with her fingers.

"Ey, puir, puir leddy," Jean, keeping finger and thumb on the dead eyelids, turned toward Daisy with two tear-balls bowling down the rugged field of her face; "she's gone, she's gone. Ey, gone off all her lone—died as she lived, bairnie—while we're crackin' awa careless-like down in yon kitchen. Stane deid, an' nigh stark against the layin'-oot."

CHAPTER XVII.

A RAINCLOUD.

“**W**HEN a chap has a bit of a brain,” said a voice, speaking from behind a crinkled newspaper that was doing temporary service as a fan, “and a habit of seeing rather far into things, if you know what I mean—it’s *such* a jolly nuisance that he can’t get it before the public without writing it down. Isn’t it, rather, don’t you think, Lady Ware?”

“I suppose it rather must be, kind of,” said Daisy, who, in a smart white skirt and blouse, and canvas shoes, occupied the other end of the tennis-court bench on the Wares’ lawn, “but you should worry about that, Arthur. The public has enough books to read anyway.”

“Not of the kind I should write, they haven’t,” declared Lord Arthur Milcourt, raising toward a green bough above them the ingenuous face of twenty-one; “I say, can you type a bit?”

“What?” Daisy demanded, wrinkling her brows at the speaker in a comical way; “oh, you mean, run a typewriter. No.”

“Weren’t you employed in an office or something, when old Will discovered—er—met you?”

And didn't you run—that is, operate—a typing machine there?"

"I was a housemaid before I was married," replied Daisy, dimpling, "and I didn't know a typewriter from a bale of hay."

"Ah!" commented Lord Arthur, regarding her. "I say, old Will's a queer sort, don't you think?" he added, with apparent irrelevance, after a moment.

Daisy rose to her feet and tossed her tennis racquet down on the bench.

"Not half so queer as some people I could name," she observed, pinning on her hat. "I'm going down town. Do you want to come, or will you stay here? There's a book up in the library about writers or painters or something. I came across it the other day when I was looking for something else. Full of pictures of homely-looking men, it is—some of them bald-headed, and others with hair down to the coat-collars."

"I'll stay and glance over the book," said Lord Arthur, stretching out luxuriously on the bench; "I say, get it and bring it out, will you, there's a good soul. I shouldn't wonder if it's jolly interesting. Baldheaded men! You *are* a rum one."

"Get it yourself, you lazy, long-legged lump," said Daisy, promptly; "who was your servant this time last year?"

"Ah— sorry," murmured Lord Arthur (the

words were apologetic, but the tone was supercilious); "I'll go and fetch it myself." He marched off to the house; and as he marched, he muttered: "'Long-legged lump!' Jowve, but it's *wickid*— poor old Will!"

Daisy went up to her pretty suite of rooms with their ivied balcony. She did not notice the details of their furnishings now with quite so fresh and keen a pleasure as on that first morning, now two months past, when she had opened new-waked eyes in the dainty, pink bedroom. She stepped about now with a casual and proprietary air—turning the shower on in the bathroom for a cooling splash after her recent game of tennis with young Lord Arthur, (Ware's second cousin, "just out")—laying out a simple, girlish dress from her well-stocked wardrobe—shaking out a folded towel or two and laying them handily on the glass rack at the end of the bathtub. Ada the maid was at her service if she cared to ring. But Daisy had been her own maid for seventeen years and intended to keep on in the same way.

Only a few moments elapsed till, smart and parasolled, she stepped out through the side door and into the cinder-path that led, with many a leisurely looping, to the picket-gate that gave to the street. Life at the Wares' had wrought some changes in her appearance. The color in her face was more delicate, and her skin clearer. Her mo-

diste had corseted her in long willowy lines, so that, although her height had not increased a particle, she looked taller. Her ankles, in their silk stockings, showed a more shapely fulness where they met the hem of her short neat walking-skirt.

She passed from the residential street to a corner where a trolley-line crossed, and caught a car. It was the Wares' chauffeur's afternoon "off", and Daisy's own little runabout was being repaired at the garage downtown.

Her destination was the postoffice. She had answered that grim letter from her mother with a brief note in which she had asked that any further letters from the home farm should be addressed to her, in her maiden name, at the city "general delivery". Her object in this note, which mentioned nothing of her marriage, was to pique the curiosity of John Nixon and his wife, so that they would, in all probability, actually fulfil their expressed intention of coming to town and taking her back to the farm.

She had not called at the "general delivery" wicket since despatching this note home; and this was her self-appointed mission to-day.

Evidently she had succeeded in waking the interest of her mother and stepfather; for the clerk, with a smile, passed out a letter addressed in the sloping irregular handwriting of Mrs. Lovina

Nixon; the postmark showing it had been in the office some days. Daisy took the missive to one of the side-tables and opened it.

"Your pa and me," wrote Mrs. Lovina, "will be in town to get you, like I said, right after thrashen. You neento think your goen to get away the like of that. You can be looken fur us about the end of Oktobr. Mebbe we wont be so hard on you when we get you back, if youl come down to the train and meet us and save us trouble but if we have to put the police onto you or go to any expens to get ahold of you, wel take it out of your hide when we get you home here and you can bet on that, so mind, itl be just like Im tellen you, so you can do wichever you like for to do."

Daisy twinkled and dimpled from brow to chin-point as she folded the letter and slipped it into her hand-bag. She knew Mrs. Lovina Nixon!

When Daisy had commenced to read her letter, broad daylight had filled the postoffice rotunda, and a little sunbeam had slanted like a slung javelin from the window-sash down across the desk against which she leaned. As she looked up now, however, after depositing the missive in her reticule, she saw that, across the big room, the electric lights had been turned on; and, glancing toward the window-pane, she saw that heavy clouds had come up and that, already, there

showed here and there on the glass, the splash of a raindrop.

As the trolley line did not approach within three blocks of the Ware gate, and as there was quite a walk across the lawn as well, Daisy decided the best way to avoid a wetting was to take one of the taxis which were parked in a long line by the curb, just outside the postoffice. Hastily hooking her parasol over her arm, she hurried out of the revolving door and across the sidewalk. Just as she was about to step into one of the dingy vehicles labelled "Auto for Hire", a jitney drew up by the curb to let out a passenger; and Daisy, out of the corner of her eye, saw a dry-smiling face, a profusion of riotously "kinky" hair, that made it necessary to set the peaked chauffeur's cap a little to one side, and a pair of narrowed humorous eyes that, however, looked soberly away as she said, "Hello, Jimmy Knight. Want a dead-head passenger?"

"Step in, ma'am," said Jimmy, formally, holding his eyes steadily forward as he reached back, deftly felt for the latch, and opened the tonneau door.

"Haven't you any room in front?" Daisy raised her lashes very slowly, then dropped them and put her head on one side.

"You ken sit in front if you so prefer, lady," Jimmy answered, with emphasis of politeness, as

he closed the tonneau again, and opened the fore-door. Daisy had no sooner hopped in and seated herself than the rain came on heavily. Jimmy, reaching up, let down the storm-curtains on both sides and buttoned them fast before he started the car.

"Thanks so much, chauffeur," acknowledged Daisy, smiling up sidewise as she mimicked his manner.

"Don't mention it, madam," deprecated Jimmy Knight, throwing in his clutch. The car skidded slightly on the arch of the pavement, but ran smooth and straight, as the engine, in the street-centre, picked up speed. Jimmy's gloved finger mechanically "gave her gas" or advanced the spark, as occasion required. Outside, the rain poured steadily, misting the mica peep-holes in the storm-curtains and half-blinding the wind-shield. The car stopped frequently for additional passengers; and soon the tonneau was filled with dour figures in wet raincoats that rustled shrilly as the owners moved, watching in a fidget for home streets.

Said one of the passengers, a girl, as, leaning back in her seat after glancing around the edge of the storm-curtain, her eyes fell on Daisy's fashionably-clad figure:

"Some swell jane in the front seat with the driver, Lil."

The remark was made with unmannerly distinctness; and the speaker's companion, another girl of the same commonplace city type, made answer, also in a tone purposely raised to reach Daisy's ear:

"Oh, well, we all know what them dolled-up kind is."

"Hey!" Jimmy Knight's head jerked around, and a glinting iris swam into that corner of his eye-socket next the last speaker, "do you skirts want to get out o' this car head-first? If not, shut up!"

The second girl looked at the first one.

"Well, the *very* idea!" she said audibly, after a second or two.

"The idosity of him!" commented Girl Number One, also in a loud tone; "some friend, I guess. They all have their friends."

Jimmy turned toward the curb, and threw on the brake. As the car skidded to a standstill, he banged open the tonneau door.

"Get out!" he said. "Go on—the both of you! Get to hell out of here! Keep your darned fares."

There was that in Jimmy's tone and look which caused the two to act promptly.

"Some gentleman!" remarked Girl Number Two, as she descended on the wet street.

"Oh, it doesn't matter," fired back Number

One, as they walked away, heads up, "we live on the next street, anyway."

"That's ten cents I owe you," said Daisy to Jimmy Knight, dimpling.

Jimmy did not answer—at least, not in words. He put his lips together, slammed home the clutch and the car leaped forward.

By the end of another ten minutes the last two of the passengers in the back portion of the jitney had reached their home corner, and the car was empty except for Daisy and Jimmy.

"I'll take y' home, lady," he said, brusquely; "no coat—get wet to the skin—this here rain."

"Thank you," aped Daisy, formally. Then she put her chin in the air, and silence reigned.

"What *you* mad at?" came Jimmy's voice, presently. "Who said they didn't 'feel like' marry-in", and then went straight off and married money? Not me. You ain't got a thing in the world to be sore at: I have, an' I'm darned good and sore. I didn't think it was in you, Kid—honest, I didn't. . . . Here we are at your door. Get out! don't set there, with the servants maybe lookin' out of the windows."

Daisy's face was red as she dismounted. She made a step away, then came back.

"I'm— I'm—", she began, the color on her cheeks deepening.

"Yes, you are," said Jimmy Knight, dryly,

“gopd an’ plenty. No use o’ standin’ there and chewin’ the fat now. Get into the house, and get them wet duds off. You give me a pain, you do!”

The car, with a scornful roar, shot off along the driveway of the Ware grounds, and Daisy was alone. Presently something rolled down her cheek and ran into the corner of her mouth. It had a salt taste. It was a tear.

“Some folk wad still be findin’ something tae greet about, even if they had the warld with a wire dike about it,” remarked Jean, who was now chief (under Lady Frances, of course) in the Ware kitchen; regarding Daisy in her keen and kind scrutinizing way, as the latter, entering the room, sat down moodily in a chair, dropped her hands into her lap, and stared before her with pensive wet lashes lowered; “Man! lassie, but ye’re ill tae suit!”

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE BLEAK TWO.

THE November draught swept frostily down from the tracks to the station subway where Daisy, in her smart furs, stood, some three months later, waiting for the passengers from the train which had just roared into the great iron-ceiled shed overhead. She could not help thinking of the day when, gazing wonderingly about her, she had trotted alongside the self-assured and patronising Fred Beatty through this very way—forgetting, on that occasion, her travel-soiled blouse, in her wonder and rapture as the city rose about her like a warm sun-glowing tide. Only six months ago!

As the passengers from the newly-arrived train commenced to file along the corridor, Daisy, watching from her place in line, found her interest centred almost as much in looking for some forlorn and eager little person like that self of her present memory, as in “keeping her eye peeled” (in accordance with the request contained in a recently-received letter) for John and Lovina Nixon. But the travellers on this train were nearly all either blase souls of the “drummer” type, who have no wonder left for anything be-

neath the sun, or badger-gray country people who looked as though they were on a business trip and were doing mental arithmetic relating to hotel-bills as they stumped along. All bored, dull, worried or indifferent. No gay, no dancing, no holiday souls in the whole drab-faced file—at almost the end of which came stony-faced John Nixon with his square beard, dingy skin, harshly-drawn brows and mouth, and small suspicious eyes; and thin, stooped, fault-finding Lovina, with her sharp nose, her glance of ill-surmise, and bonnet pinned teeteringly on her top-knot.

Recollection blew on Daisy like a cold wave with her first view of them; but the feeling passed, and she found herself waiting mischievously to see if they would recognize her.

John Nixon passed dourly on; but Lovina's hawklike eyes, as she drew opposite to where Daisy stood, found her daughter instantly.

"Well, mother," Daisy drew her cape of sables about her shoulders and, moulding her features into a welcoming smile — which, when facing Lovina Nixon, required an effort—stepped forward.

The mother's chin came out. Her eyes drew to button-like points. There was nothing maternal about the look. It was merely a glance which bespoke ill-expectation gratified.

"John!" she chirped, to the stepfather, who had meandered on, "here!"

John Nixon turned and came back. His brows knitted as he glanced from his wife to the girl in her splendid furs; then, as his eyes travelled to Daisy's face, he gave vent to an expression which sounded like, "Ur-rh!"

"Look at this!" said Lovina Nixon; catching an end of the sable cape, holding it up for her husband's scrutiny, and then tossing it from her and making a motion of dusting off her hands; "You know what that means, I s'pose, John?"

"Ay," said John Nixon, "ay-hay."

"Disgraced!" said Lovina Nixon; "Disgraced! Oh, you— you thing! Just wait till I get you home! Just you wait!"

Daisy's cheeks warmed at this. But, a moment after, her indignation changed to an impulse of roguery: she would let these two, for the present, believe the things they thought!

"I s'pose you can show us a respectable hotel," said her mother. "But remember— you don't get out of my sight again. You stay right with me in the hotel, till we leave town. Carry this valise for me."

Daisy dimpled with devilment as she obeyed this refreshingly familiar instruction; and, accentuating her figure-lines as she walked, for the especial benefit of the furtively-watching couple,

she led the way to where Tim Davitt, the Wares' chauffeur, waited outside the depot with the limousine.

"What's this?" demanded Lovina Nixon, surveying the vehicle, "a livery rig?"

"Yes, mother," said Daisy, smiling aside at the chauffeur, as Davitt, touching his hat, held the door open. The mother, knocking her bonnet askew against the top of the car, blundered to the farther end of a seat. John Nixon lumbered in after her. Then Daisy, after a low-toned "Home, Timmy," hopped in and snuggled mischievously against her stepfather, who was in the centre of the seat.

"Don't ye be 'fraid," he leaned over and whispered, not unkindly, in her ear, "I'll not let yur Moh whup ye."

Turning street-corners smoothly and swiftly, the limousine soon reached the home grounds and was brought by Tim Davitt, deftest of chauffeurs, to a soft gliding halt before the long front veranda of the Ware house.

"Is this an expensive boardin'-place?" Lovina Nixon enquired, as she and her husband followed Daisy up the steps.

"Oh—not very," Daisy answered, as she swung open the door and ushered her parents into the quietly furnished hall, with its deep, soft rugs, polished floor, and walnut hat-rack. A door on

the right led into the library; and through this Daisy, after depositing the mother's valise in the hall, led the fumbling man and woman. The room was empty, as Lady Frances was in the kitchen, overseeing, after her thrifty fashion, the supper preparations, and Sir William was not yet home from the office.

"Queer kind of a hotel." Lovina Nixon's eyes followed her daughter suspiciously, as Daisy went to the centre-table and opened a massive volume with brass binding and buckle.

"Come on, mother, and register!" said the girl then, with a queer expression; pointing down to the opened page, and regarding the sharp-nosed ill-expectant woman with eyes that were bright and flashing as live fire.

Lovina Nixon advanced; felt for her glasses; put them on; bent over; and, in the big family Bible that Daisy had laid open, read the record of the marriage of her daughter to Sir William Ware, Baronet.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CHOICE OF THE DRAY.

SIR WILLIAM sat in the drawing-room, playing the host to John Nixon.

As Nixon had his feet propped up on the back of a chair in front of him, Sir William, in order to put his guest thoroughly at his ease, secured a chair and cocked *his* feet up in the air, too. And, in order that Nixon might not be embarrassed by suddenly finding out that he was the only one who was spitting copiously on the tiles in front of the fireplace, Sir William also occasionally contributed a light expectoration in that locality. Spitting had been a yet unlearned accomplishment with Ware; but, by watching John Nixon, who was a pastmaster, the baronet learned, in the course of half an hour or so, to hit the centre of the tiling with a fair degree of accuracy, and without leaning forward in his chair.

As far, however, as putting Nixon at his ease was concerned, Sir William need not have troubled. It was an oft-enunciated maxim of John Nixon's that whatever he did was right, if he did it. "Do's you want'er," was the way Nixon put it; "dun't ast nobuddy fur nawthun."

Presently, noting that the moistened area in front of the fireplace threatened to overflow and inundate the flooring about the tiles, Sir William jumped up, as though with a sudden inspiration and said, smiting Nixon playfully on his tree-stump shoulder:

“Take you on at billiards upstairs, old chap!”

“Ur-rh?” Another salivation dampened the tiling as Nixon twisted his stocky torso about.

“I was about to say,” Sir William pursued—having gathered from his guest’s tone and attitude that John Nixon did not know anything about playing billiards—“that I would take you on at a game of billiards, *only* it’s so jolly uninteresting. Shall we stroll out and see the deer?”

“Ain’t interested in deers,” said Nixon, “’n I wun’t budge a step to see nawthun I dun’t want for to see. Never *would*.”

“You’re jolly well right,” agreed Sir William; “I can thoroughly sympathize with you, Nixon, old man.. Silly things, deer, after all—aren’t they?”

“I tell you, though,” Nixon arose, grunted, stretched, scratched, shook his legs, and, with a certain awesome gapping sound and a gust of fetid breath, yawned in his host’s face, “what I *will* do, English. Take me somewhurs whurr I ken git a schooner o’ beer—thuh drinks on you, mind, fur I ain’t got a cent to spare—an’ I’ll go

along, every steppuh the way. How des that ketch you?"

~~"Happy thought!"~~ Sir William clapped his guest heartily on the back. "Bright idea! Nixon, you're a man after my own heart. Half a jiff, till I bring our hats and coats."

The two left the house by the side door; but, as they reached the gate of the grounds, Sir William on the excuse that he had forgotten his pocket-book, requested Nixon to walk on slowly, and himself hurried back to the house.

"Was you tannin' thuh leather furr a new bill-book, er whutt?" demanded John Nixon, testily, as his host, after quite a lapse of time, rejoined him.

"I really must apologise, old chap—I really must. Shan't let it occur again," Sir William said, good-humoredly. He could not very well tell Nixon that he had spent the interval in personally cleaning up with pieces of newspaper the mess by the fireplace, for fear Lady Frances should happen in and see it while they were away.

Upstairs, in Lady Frances' own sitting-room—a big, airy apartment, in which, on quiet afternoons, she read or sewed or knitted, or napped in the old arm-chair she had brought with her from overseas—the venerable lady of the house had set herself the task of entertaining the mother of her son's wife.

“Ineffably, innately common and nasty-natured,” had been her inward pronouncement when first she faced Lovina Nixon; but there had been no outward sign, although one who knew the old gentlewoman’s ways might have discerned a more careful and precise politeness in her attitude. Now, on this afternoon of the last day of the Nixons’ stay, which had endured, for what Lady Frances had termed, in a *matin soliloquy*, “three dreadful days”, she had steeled herself to the duty of making the time pass agreeably until evening and train-time should bring deliverance.

Ada, the maid, had brought the tea-urn and “curate”; and now the three women—Lady Frances in her big chair; Mrs. John Nixon dangling one of the fine china tea-cups, which she had drained at a draught, from her forefinger, and eating cake with her elbow on the table and the cake scattering crumbs as she gesticulated with the hand that held it; and Daisy holding a skein of yarn, from which Lady Frances was winding a ball—sat ill-assorted in the large room.

“Do have some more tea, Mrs. Nixon, won’t you?” invited Lady Frances, eyeing the suspended teacup nervously. “Daisy, dear, give your mother some more tea.”

But, as Mrs. Nixon had already had three cups, the urn was empty. Daisy hopped up and carried

the shapely silver receptacle to the kitchen, to get some more hot water from Jean's kettle. As the door closed after her daughter, Mrs. Lovina Nixon leaned over toward Lady Frances with a greenish light in her eyes.

"I s'pose it ain't no use o' tellin' you, Mam, now," she said; "I mean, now that your son's tight married to her and can't get loose, that yen girl run away from us. Yes, sir—run away with a feller. Never seen nawthun like it in all m' born days. Never did." And Mr. Lovina nodded and sowed caraway seed on the carpet in showers as she vibrated the cake.

"Just like'r, though," she supplemented, after a moment, "so it was. 'Xpected somethin' like it, all along. Warn't s'prised one iota."

"Your daughter," Lady Frances said—very slowly, and governing her voice with difficulty—"has quite voluntarily told us all the circumstances you mention. I—I really do not think," the old gentlewoman could barely keep the frost out of her tone, "that we should discuss her in her absence. I really don't think we should."

"Oh, well," Mrs. John Nixon's radial arm described a flying circle of cake-crumbs about her chair as she indicated, with a sweeping gesture, that she washed her hands of the matter, "if you're satisfied, we are."

"Daisy," Lady Frances said, levelly, "has

proved a very fine and frank and sweet young woman. Her adaptability, too, has been most satisfactory. I have become very much attached to her—and I really cannot listen, nor will I listen, to anything against my son's wife."

"Oh, all right, all—right," Lovina Nixon smacked her cup down. "I wish't you'd had a siege of her like I've had, so I do. You'd talk different."

"I think," Lady Frances Ware rose out of her chair with remarkable vigor for eighty-two, "that you have probably taken a wrong course with her—in fact, I feel quite sure you must have taken a wrong course with her. Now, as I proposed before, we will change the subject. Would you care to go for a motor ride? I shall tell Davitt, the chauffeur, to have you back here in time for a leisurely and comfortable meal before your train."

Mrs. Lovina Nixon shrugged. "Might's well do that as anything else, I s'pose."

Lady Frances rang the bell. "Telephone Davitt," she said, to Ada the maid, "to bring around the larger car. Then tell Lady Ware her mother would like to do a little shopping, and wishes her to go as well. Take my hand-bag with you, and tell Lady Ware she may use what money she likes from my purse, if she is short."

A quarter of an hour later, Lady Frances, hav-

ing seen the motor car off down the drive, returned to her sanctum, sat down quietly in her big chair, and took up her sewing. Presently, however, her needle paused, and she found herself, after a habit she had, drifting off into half-audible soliloquy.

"William said," she murmured musingly, "that he thought the man a fair masculine type, who might have developed well, with proper opportunity. But that woman! Thoroughly nasty, ingrate, underhand. An improvement in manners would only be a hopelessly inadequate veneer. A nature such as she has would not be mended by the opportunities of three generations and more. I do hope William does *not* intend to take those people in tow, for I am really not equal to it."

A telephone interrupted the reverie of Lady Frances. Five minutes later, pale and anxious, but not forgetting the practicality that had been her lifetime's habit, Lady Frances Ware was in her son's rooms across the hall, turning down the bed for the reception of Sir William who, knocked down by a motor dray as he was piloting the half-drunken Nixon across a crowded street downtown was being brought home in the ambulance.

Nixon, reaching the hotel bar that afternoon, had discovered an unforeseen weakness for what he termed, "beer"—a word that with him, meant everything drinkable in the alcoholic line—and

had, in spite of Ware's remonstrances, continued to imbibe beyond all reasonable limits: dragging Sir William, who felt responsible and could not well abandon him, to a big bar in the central portion of the city, and even paying for his own drinks after Ware had flatly refused to take the risk of buying any more for him.

"You *are* rather a thirsty chap, you know," Ware, who had himself taken only the original proposed glass of refreshment, had remarked, as at last he had managed to get Nixon's wobbling head faced toward home. It was while the two were in the act of crossing a street to a taxi Ware had hailed, that the motor dray had run the baronet down. With a last half-spasmodic push, he had thrust Nixon out of harm's way, and the latter had not received so much as a scratch.

CHAPTER XX.

JOHN NIXON'S INVITATION.

“WELL,” said Sir William, a little feebly to Daisy, who sat on a stool beside his chair, with her head resting on the cushioned arm in such a position that Ware could stroke her hair with his “good” hand, “this has jolly well taught me to look about, on street-crossings. I suppose I am what the tram/people would call a ‘jay walker’. I say, Puss—aren’t you sorry you married such a silly ass. Be frank, now! Say I’m a blundering idiot.”

“No, you’re not,” said Daisy; “how’s your arm feeling?”

“Tip-top,” Ware, as he replied offhand about the broken limb, regarded the girl with a bright and tender approval.

“And your head?” continued Daisy, “does it ache much, there where the bruise is? Let me get some fresh ice.”

“For the third and last time—no!” Sir William responded, flipping her ear; “this ice is cold enough: it has clotted every vein in my bally forehead. I say, kitten, isn’t that somebody knocking?”

The knock which sounded on the door—that of

the small sitting-room of Sir William's bedroom suite—was clumsily-knuckled and hesitating. It sounded once, audibly—then a second time, feebly—and, after the second knock, the scuffle of a heavy foot receding indicated that the knocker was going away without entering. Daisy went quickly and opened the door.

"Come on, Dad," she said.

Nixon stopped in the hall, his back half-turned, and spoke to his foster-daughter over-shoulder.

"You go on about your business a while," he said, gruffly, "I want to talk to the boss."

Ware, hearing this dialogue from his chair, smiled queerly to himself.

"Right-O," he called, "run along, my dear, for a jiffy; see if Mother has any messages for us. Come on, Nixon, old chap!"

Reddening in an odd way at the cordial tone, John Nixon, his hands hanging awkwardly and his beard canted aside in a sheepish attitude, came in, pushing the door shut behind him. He lowered himself into the nearest chair.

"How are *you*?" said Sir William, humorously and companionably, "I say — that *was* a jolly cataclysm! Lucky to get off with our lives, what?" Nixon, sheepish but still characteristically blunt, came straight to his point.

"I wouldn't have got off with no life," he said,

"if you hadn't slung me out o' the way and got stepped on yourself."

"Rubbish!" said Ware, briefly; "all the same, it's good of you to put it that way, old chap. Makes me feel less mortified at my stupidity in standing there like a post and getting knocked down. Let's jolly well talk of something else."

John Nixon's head came up and back. He put his right hand down on his knee-cap with a slap that could be heard across the room.

"Don't you go tryin' for to head me off, English," he said, "I done wrong and I'm a-goin' to own up to it. Here, I been walkin' around your nice house here, a-spittin' all over the floor as if it was a hotel—it kind of seems like that to me, because we don't sling on no style out west here—and all because I never did like an Englishman. They always make me contrary. When I'm with an Englishman, I talk rough and go bullin' around, just to be the opposite to what I think he is—"

Sir William leaned out over the arm of his chair and extended his uninjured hand toward Nixon.

"Put her there, as you say in Canada," he said, beamingly, "Nixon, you're a brick. And if we English make you Canadians feel contrary, I'll admit we bring it on ourselves. We, too, are a contrary people; and the more you try to put on this roughness of manner, which is not your own,

the more we try to put on this finicky niceness, which so rubs you the wrong way. Just because we desire to rub you the wrong way. And so we see-saw, back and forth, until eventually we come to fisticuffs, or worse. Nixon, I believe you've hit the peg on which hangs the whole difficulty between England and Canada. Now that we two understand each other, let's set an example to our peoples: let's be natural. Put her there, I say."

John Nixon put her there, and the two shook hands—an inter-imperial handshake.

"How would you like for to come out to my place a while, English?" he said, after a moment. "As I said, we don't sling on no style nor nothin', but we never know what it is to go hungry. The roof don't let in no rain, neither; and you can't sleep on nothin' more comfortable than a bedtick stuffed with prairie hay."

"Ripping!" Sir William, "knocked about" as he was, all but hoisted himself to his feet in his enthusiasm; "I say, Nixon, when shall we start?"

"Next train, if you say so. Anyway," John Nixon rubbed an eyebrow with his gray-bristled forefinger, "I'm worryin' about the stock, and I want to get back home. Got any drinkin'-water around, English?"

Sir William was about to touch the bell, when Nixon, glancing toward the bathroom, saw basin, tap and tumbler.

"Don't ring, for me," he said, getting up, "I can work the fasset myself, without no help botherin' around."

As his guest returned from the bathroom, sweeping the water-drops from his beard by drawing his hand down over it, Sir William said:

"Will you be offended if I ask you a question—a straight question—Nixon, old chap?"

"You couldn't offend me now, English," said John Nixon, "anyhow straight questions goes, between us, after this. That's our agreement, ain't it?"

"That's it, exactly," said Ware, "so my question is this: Why do you persist in calling me 'English'? It sounds a bit like some sort of an imputation. Do you see my point?"

"I don't foller you," said John Nixon, as he laid his hand on the door-knob; "the only reason I call you 'English' is because your reel name keeps slippin' my mind."

"It shouldn't be hard to remember," said Ware

"What is it?" queried Nixon.

"To you, henceforth," said the baronet, "it is—Bill."

"Yes, that's you, all over again," said Lovina Nixon, late that evening, as she thrust into her iron-gray hair two or three matutinal hairpins, in places where they would not jab her, and clambered into bed, "astin' these tony English people

out to the farm, to turn up their noses at everything. Well, Daise'll have to look after them, for I got enough to do with the housework and the milkin'. Is the old woman coming along, too?"

John Nixon yawned, turned his back to her, and wrapped around himself two-thirds of the bed-clothes.

"You go on to sleep," he said, "you'll feel better in the mornin'."

Lovina, however, continued on rebelliously, although the rest of her grumbling was sunk to a smothered monotone by her nightly habit of sleeping with the blankets over her head; but her last thought before she dropped off to sleep was that now at last she would have a chance to bring from the back of the farmhouse cupboard the "weddin' set" of neat china that had been waiting there during nearly a quarter of a century for an appropriate guest.

"No, I don't think I shall go, William," said Lady Frances, adjusting the cushion at the back of her son's head and handing him the evening newspaper, "this northwest winter is here now—don't forget that it's November, not May, outside—and the plan sounds to me rather too much like Polar exploration. You say you intend to go out for the winter. Well, if you survive the experience, perhaps I shall join you in the spring. But surely you're not going to start on this wild

expedition the way you are. I am told it is difficult to go on snowshoes with a crutch. Those people, too! William, you are insane."

"Mother, dear," Ware patted the capable old hand that rested on his chair-arm, "you said that once before, you remember. And that reminds me—we haven't discussed this with Daisy. Let's have her in now, if she's about."

"She's about," rejoined Lady Frances—a little sarcastically, but with an unconcealed accent of motherly affection—, "she's having tea with McTavish, the cook."

CHAPTER XXI.

IN THE BLIZZARD.

“**S**HOVE on all the clothes you can get on to you, Eng—Bill,” counselled John Nixon, sucking his teeth shrilly as he donned a lupine-looking wombat coat and reached for his mittens, “and after that put on an extry sweater, as they say. She’s a-going to blow.”

The place was the Toddburn hotel, where Sir William and John Nixon, left there by the warm and friendly train at 11 a.m., had now, an hour and a half later, come out of the dining-room with a good meal “under their belts”.

“You don’t need to hurry, gettin’ your duds on, Bill,” John Nixon said, as he went out, “the Missis will be pokin’ around the store down there for an hour yet, and Jim’s buyin’ himself a new suit, to have for when Daise gets here. I’ve told him she’s married now, but it don’t seem to sink in. . . . You better stay here and keep warm till we fetch the team round to the door.”

Sir William stayed—not to keep warm, but to look about him, like a boy at a circus. Somehow, the effect of the cold dry tingling air that resided in the streets of this prairie hamlet seemed to percolate in from outside, in spite of storm win-

dow and door, striking upon the nostrils bracingly and making one "feel good" in spite of the blue fog of tobacco-smoke and the odor of wet leather and fur. The effects of Ware's accident, now a week old, had pretty well passed, and the hereditary health of the Wares glowed in his face again and sparkled in his eyes.

He stood with his back toward the window, his hands tucked into the side-pockets of his Norfolk coat, his attitude the Englishman's inimitable easy and negligent one which imparts to the stiffest suit the comfortable effect of flannels, and glanced down the short perspective of the Todd-burn hotel sitting room and bar, which were in a kind of suite, with a swinging-door between.

The roof of this place was very low, and the walls were very near one, and after the spacious places in which Ware had lived his life, it was a bit like standing in a piano-box. If the situation of this hotel had been a narrow byway in a city, it would have been a slum, a locality of death, a room of hollow coughings and faces dreary with debility and gloom. But here, on the wide prairie it was in effect a sanitarium, if one might judge by the figures that breezed about, the harsh but deep-lunged voices that came out of the midst of steam-clouds made when the outside door opened, the faces glowing and tanned by gale and snow-shine.

One only needed to listen a moment to the hearty laughing and the sentences detached at random from the blend of cheery, companionable greeting and rallying, to know that the minds of these western men were as healthy as their bodies.

“No, sir—I’d never go back on him. Bob an’ me was neighbors a-homesteadin’. It ain’t his fault if he had to give up farmin’ and get a job in Jim McMillan’s livery stable. His health give out—that’s all.”

“Yes, sir, boy—she’s a-goin’ to blow up some harricane before dark. This reminds me of yon day, four years ago—yous’ll all remember the time—when Elleck Hamilton an’ me started out for home on the bob-sleighs, pickled up to the eye-brows. Elleck, he was worse than me when we started; but Elleck’s as strong as a horse, and when she started to blow, he slung off the effects of the licker like tossin’ off a hat. But the stuff had got a kind of a holt on me; I got cold and started for to go to sleep. However, Elleck he seen me home safe. My face was froze a little, that’s all—but Elleck, he’d had to get out of his bob-sleigh so many times to look after my team, that he’d froze both legs, one as fur as the ankle and the other clare up to the knee. Had to have her taken off. Never was any good after that, Elleck. He was worth about ten thousand dollars when that happened; and to-day he’s buyin’ grain

for an elevator company, at seventy-five dollars a month. But I've done pretty well myself, an' old Elleck knows this—that whenever his pride'll let him quit work, he can come over to my place, and set down by the stove, and put his bad leg up on a chair an' keep her there, for life, even if he lives to be a hundred and fifty."

Exclamation and anecdote rattled on; fog of tobacco-smoke and stench of snow melting on fur filled the air; free grammar and the broad "a" had unchecked currency in this organ-box of a western railway-hamlet hotel: but Sir William Ware, standing by the iron-rodded window with philosophic hands in his coat-pockets, had only one distinguishable impression—that he was being educated, that this west was giving him something denied by the university.

This was Western Canada—blunt, gruff, western Canada. Not too forward in making one's acquaintance; not too stiff and "standoffish". Not caring sixpence—so long as you yourself were "all right"—who your father was, nor how much money you were worth. Western Canada, where nobody who works—or, if he can't or won't work, can tell a good yarn—is allowed to starve. Western Canada, which never "picks" a fight, but—well, just try to "run on" her!

A raucous "hey!" brought Sir William about. Glancing out through the window, in the direction

of the hall, he saw John Nixon signalling to him from the seat of a bob-sleigh. Hurrying on scarf and coat, Ware hastened out, creaked across the sidewalk and smilingly awaited instructions as to boarding this western vehicle of the long trail. It had a high, green-painted double box. The front and rear seats were two boards laid across the box and draped with gunny-sacks. The front seat was occupied by John Nixon and Jim Burns, the hired man who had brought the equipage in to meet the train. On the hind seat Lovina Nixon perched, nothing of her visible except one stoical pioneer-woman eye which looked out unwinkingly at Ware through a crack between folds of gray shawl.

"Climb in alongside the Missis, Bill," directed John Nixon, who had made no special preparation for extreme weather conditions, other than to pull his corduroy cap down over his ears, "We'll need to get a-goin', if we're intendin' to strike home before we get blew off the trail. All set?"

"All set, old chap," Sir William responded, as he tucked his end of the goatskin robe around his knees and, in response to Lovina's mumbled recommendation, felt with his toes for the extra brick which Nixon had heated for him on the top of the livery stable stove; "it's a jolly good thing Daisy decided to do as Mother wanted and stay in

town for a week. Perhaps we shall have a better day, to bring her out."

"Oh, the gal wouldn't mind this," Nixon rejoined, casually, after he had "clucked" the horses into a trot down the drifted street; "no, sir, Bill; she'd have got you off that seat, a-run-nin' behind in the sleigh-track, as soon as your toes would start for to feel nippy. It would take a mighty high wind to chase Daise into the house in the winter-time, except when dinner is ready. Her and the dog is about even, when it comes to standin' the cold. Ain't that so mother?"

"Oh, yes, it's so," Lovina's voice, muffled but still recognizable in its sharpness, said through the swathes of shawl, "except when I ust to want her to fetch in an armful o' wood or a pail of water. Then you couldn't budge her from behind the stove."

"Aw, go on," Nixon, happy to be on the way home to the "stock" again, swung his whip jovially but harmlessly over the backs of the horses. "Wait till you see the happy reunion between her and Rove, Bill, when she gets here next week. It'll prove what I say about them bein' chums. Rove, he would have no use for a girl that stayed in the house: you couldn't coax him any closer to in-doors than the chip-pile, not if it was sixty below zero."

The two bay sleigh-ponies—a light team had

been chosen, as they could stand quick travel over difficult roads better than the heavy-fetlocked, big-haunched, working horses—trotted along sure-footed on the hard ridge of the trail. The last house on Toddburn's one short street was soon passed. Turning out at a wide angle from the railroad, at a point where Ware saw one of the country's tall red elevators, with staccato explosion of gasoline engine, pouring wheat into a freight-car, the prairie road set off alone across the white country.

The snowfall had been unseasonably heavy this autumn; and Sir William, looking over the side of the sleigh-box at a point where some passing horse had accidentally inched out into the soft snow and put down a leg, saw a hole nearly fifty inches deep. Plainly, if the bob-sleigh should slip off the packed hard ridge of the road, it meant a wholesale "spill", a floundering of horses, a chilling to the marrow of all concerned, and much delay. If it happened after dark, with the blizzard—the effect of which Ware had often watched from the study window of his city home—at its height, it *would* be a bit awkward.

"Was you ever out in a blizzard?" said John Nixon, suddenly; as though the thought, like that of a group of castaways in an open boat under squall-clouds, had become by sympathy communal.

“No? Well, you’re a-goin’ to be out in one to-night, English—”

“Come, come, now, old chap,” reminded Ware, “no national imputations, remember. I thought it was to be ‘Bill’—wasn’t it?”

“Well, Bill,” conceded Nixon, “as I was about to say, you’re goin’ to be out to-night in the finest whoopin’ he-blizzard since ’97. I can smell her a-comin’—all through me.”

From the sleigh—which now, with the village in the distance behind and a wholly roofless horizon-line before, was the sole, small centre of life and companionship in the midst of a snowy waste—Ware looked across the drifts toward the west, where the sun of the short, late-November afternoon was trending low. The trail ran almost due north, to where the white line of the horizon met the pale blue of that part of the sky distant from the transfiguring sun. Between these two cardinal points—north and west—the voice of winter megaphoned from northwestward that bitter weather was at hand.

The distant groves roared softly, like surf heard against the wind. Afar, the sound had the similitude of hoarse, enormous exhalation; near at hand, it was like the wash and hiss of water. The whole surface of the prairie that had been fixed and frozen, now took on an aspect of life, of ceaseless scintillation and quivering like ripples

in the sun. Ware, looking along the bright faces of the drifts, saw that this phenomenon was caused by multitudinous lines of hurrying snow-grains, serpentining over those white billows in the track of the wind, building with a wondrous rapidity little ribs and ridges of snow in the lee of every bump and projection in their path.

In the early afternoon, it had been warm, even to thawing-point. But now, as the wind rose, it shuttled with a sharp cold the woof of the air. Earlier, the air had been clear and speckless as the void above quiet water, and bland in its touch upon the skin. Now, it was clouded with gathering snow-atoms, hard as sand, whose impact upon face and hands was needle-sharp and whose irritation of the eyeballs blinded the vision with rheum. Earlier, the sky had been bright-blue from horizon to zenith. Now, it was half-fogged with a kind of smoke-blue mist, that was nothing other than the first draft of a trillion-atomed host of snow-motes drawn up to their unfriendly function by the cold whirlwind that should general their attack upon the prairie's winter peace.

The blizzard is like, and yet contrary to, the thunderstorm that is the crowning phenomenon of summer. It is like, in that it is preceded by a "weather-breeding" twelve hours or so of undue heat; it is like, in the effect of its attack; it is like, in its whipping of the outcast, its lashing of the

earth; it is somewhat like in its roar, although there is no thunder to diapason the storm of midwinter. But it is contrary in color, and in duration, and in direction—or rather, lack of direction. For the color of a blizzard is not a definite black, but a blinding white; its duration is not a few moments, but long hours of terrific, unabated wind-energy; its direction is everywhere—that is to say, you can turn your back to a thunderstorm, but you cannot turn your back to a blizzard. If you face to windward, you get the volley of the “spindrift” direct; if you face leeward, you get it round a corner, just as stingingly. To the wanderer, a blizzard is a succession of intersecting whirlwinds, not a direct blast from a definite point in the compass.

Sir William Ware, in this sleigh that was inching its course—at least, so it seemed—across the long ten miles that separated Toddburn village from the Nixon farm, felt an odd sense of dependence as he watched the gathering of the storm. There was in his whole fine body and brain no fibre of fear, as far as personal danger was concerned—for, besides the heritage of his family and race, he was too much the philosopher to regard the chance of death with anything but curiosity. But he felt awed by the cold, the great white vastness, the thrilling mighty wind—not yet at anything like its crescendo, either—and the

feeling that his sole link with safety, this bluff Canadian pioneer who held the destiny of that sleighful in his rough-mittened hands that held the horses' reins and his wonderful, but not infallible, pioneer's sense of direction, was plainly a bit anxious in spite of all his experience.

"Suppose we have a song, old chap," he leaned forward and shouted in Nixon's ear; "start up something you know, and we'll all join in the chorus."

But John Nixon shook a diffident head. "I got all I can do, handlin' the team, Bill," he said—in his Canadian way avoiding by the excuse the admission that he could not sing. "Try Jim, here—he's the singin' bird out on our ranch. Let's have that there about the 'Mistle-tree Bough', Jim—you ain't got nothin' on your mind just now."

Jim Burns, a man of few words and short, cleared his throat and, without preamble, started "The Mistletoe Bough":

The mistletoe hung in the old oak hall,
The holly-branch shone on the castle wa-all,
The bar'n's ree-tainers was blith' an' ga-ay
A-keepin' their Chris'mas ho-oliday;

O Mistletoe Bough!

O Mistletoe Bough!

There is something "catchy" about the words

and the tune of this old song of a famous tragedy, whose human interest has carried it as far around the world as "Home, Sweet Home". Ware had heard it in his nursery when it was reasonably new. He joined in it now, with a vigor that fended off the dolor of the stormy sunset and the inching sleigh on its high lonely trail. Nixon swung his whip in time; even a diffident humming came from the shawl that wrapped the head of Mrs. Lovina Nixon.

After the refrain following the last stanza was concluded, Jim Burns, on his own initiative, started his favorite, the "Blizzard Song of Meadowlea." It is a characteristic of prairie people to sing or to talk about an especially gloomy phase of a present situation. The person who has newly contracted rheumatism, for instance, is told glowingly by a sympathetic visitor that, "Hank McCaffrey, he took it in the knee—just where you got it, Joe—an' he's a-settin' on the same chair yit, an' that's ten years ago." And if Mrs. Pelkey, on the northwest quarter of Section Twenty-three, squeezes after peppering the meat in the frying-pan, Mrs. Mair, over from the northeast quarter to borrow flour for a baking of bread, remarks, "This is a bad season for to catch a cold, Bella—right in the spring o' the year. I never saw a person yet that tot'ly threw off a cold they caught in the month of Ape-rile."

It was this prairie characteristic that possessed Jim Burns, when he struck up the "Blizzard Song of Meadowlea" in the face of a gathering blizzard. This melody is a versified account of an actual happening, in which a farmhouse in the School District of Meadowlea caught fire during a blizzard and the family lost their lives in the storm.

"I say, old son," Ware leaned and tapped the singer on the shoulder at the conclusion of a line running: 'An' here an' there, in drifts of snow, a frozen corpse they found', "that is a piquant tune, you know, and you're in splendid voice—but shall we try something we all know—something comic, for instance?"

Jim Burns paused reluctantly. "Oh, all right," he grumbled, after a moment; "how about 'The Dying Cowboy'?"

"Splendid!" assented Sir William, "is that comic?"

Jim Burns rubbed his head ponderingly.

"It ain't very comic, Bill," John Nixon explained, "but—I begin to see your point—there ain't nothin' about blizzards in it. Let her go, Jim."

"Yes," said Ware, "let her go, Burns, old chap. Majority vote for 'The Dying Cowboy'. What do *you* say, Mrs. Nixon?"

"Oh, don't bother to ast the weemen folk, out

in this country," Lovina Nixon's voice came, muffled and sarcastic, from the depths of her shawl, "we ain't got no say, even when it comes to invitin' pernicketty people out to a house that ain't been swept nor dusted for two weeks."

"I took and scrubbed the whole floor, Mam, two days ago," said Jim Burns, in an injured voice. "The minute I got your letter that you was comin' home, I peeled off and went to her, with snow-water an' soap." Jim Burns did not add that he had scrubbed the farmhouse because he had expected Daisy with the party.

"Snow-water, eh?" Lovina's tone was half-hopeful, "well, Jim, you got more sense than I thought you had. Did you scrub behind the stove?"

"I scrubbed everywhere *but* there, Mam," said Jim Burns, a little sheepishly.

"Everywhere but where the most grease-spots is," Lovina threw up her hands and lapsed again into brooding silence, "that's a man, all over again; so it is."

The last verse of "The Dying Cowboy" was snatched out of the mouths of its singers by a great gust of wind and snow, scattering over the sleigh like a wave breaking over a boat. Ware, concentrated on keeping the sleighful "in good spirits", had for the moment almost forgotten the storm; but now, rudely reminded of it by the bit-

ter, stinging snow-grains that assailed his face and drove deep between scarf and neck, he drew tight the collar of his top-coat and looked up and about.

The blizzard had not yet closed about them. But in the far and hither distance it had thickened, blotting out the sun, that must now be almost at the horizon. Above, one could catch faint passing glimpses of the sky, beneath which the hurricane was throwing a dim-white canopy of upblown snow. About and about, the prairie and the air were a uniform quivering white. For perhaps a quarter-mile radius, one could still see definitely the drifts and the half-buried willow and poplar scrub; but beyond this the storm had built a superstructure, that was in opacity like a wall, but bellied and blew like a curtain under the huge inconstant impulse of the gale. Only in one respect was the motion of this rampart steady and uniform. That was in respect to its gradual, sure, terrific closing-in about the sleigh and its human handful. Ware, watching it fascinated, thought of the cell in the famous tale of "The Pit and the Pendulum", with its contracting circular wall that precipitated the prisoner into a central abyss.

No abyss yawned beneath the feet of the laboring horses nor the runners of the creaking, inching sleigh. But that road they trod was like the narrow path over a morass: all about it the foot-

ing was soft, deep, delaying. If iron-shod hoof or steel-shod runner slipped, it meant loss of time, lowering of precious bodily heat, fatigue, failing of the heart—all preparations for that slowing-down of the restless body-molecules to the final stoppage which should mark the cold triumph of the frost:

“And here and there, in drifts of snow—”

“Ugh!” said Ware, humorously.

But there was nothing comic in that nearing wall, whose base crept over the drifts like the edge of a tide at flow.

It might have been midnight, or a little before, when the Galician girl whose function it had been to keep the fire going in the Nixon farmhouse stove, saw a face move by the window outside, on the way to the door. Mary had plenty of time to see it, for the face moved very slowly beyond the frost-edged pane; and she noted that it was not the face of John Nixon, with his corduroy cap, nor the red face under a “dogskin” cap, of Jim Burns. Nor was the knock, which presently sounded faint and erratic on the door-panel—like the chance rap of a frozen branch on a window—recognizable as that of anybody she knew.

She was a little afraid, as she listened to that rap which sounded as though the visitor were half-asleep; but Mary knew enough about the northwest not to keep a man standing outside on

a night like this, no matter who he might be. Accordingly, she ran and opened the door.

"G'd ev'ng," said the blue lips of Sir William Ware, as he fumbled his way across the door-jamb. Mary, glancing at his face, saw that uncanny white patches covered his cheeks and that his nose was whitened to the bridge. His feet, on the floor, dragged and scuffled like the ends of cordwood sticks.

Mary knew: she had spent five winters in the west.

"You stay there," she said, backing Sir William out of the doorway with a vigorous palm, "till I big pail ice-water bring. I fix you."

"Ah, but—stop a bit," Ware spoke thickly; "your master—and mistress—far along the trail—need help. We—Burns and I—followed the horses here. Nixon stayed — with wife — she wouldn't leave the sleigh." He stopped and leaned heavily back against the door frame. Mary saw that his eyes were closing.

"I fix you first," she said, snatching up an enormous wooden bucket, throwing her apron over her head, and rushing out to the well. About her the huge veil-ends of the storm swirled as, racing down the track of light from the open doorway, she disappeared a moment into the roaring dark; then, presently, came into view again, run-

ning, with the newly-pumped icy water splashing over the edge of the bucket.

Ware, his initiative suspended and the world appearing to race about him in a dizzy flicker of white and glare and black, leaned upon the door. He felt his legs giving way, but could not stiffen them; and presently he fell into a sitting posture on the door-sill, with the wild night on his right hand, and on his left the homely interior of the farmhouse with its coal-oil lamp flaring frantically in the draught from the open door.

In this position, and with his eyes closed, Sir William felt a hand come up to his face and rub so vigorously that the back of his head bumped the door-panel with a jolt.

"I don't know what's happening," was Sir William's vague thought, "but let it happen, whatever it is. Let anything happen—now."

The rubbing continued, with an occasional pause by the aggressor—that might have been for more or less malicious scrutiny of his or her work—and presently Sir William became aware of a slight tingling in a face that up till now had been wholly without sensation. The tingling grew to a glow; and with the glow came a bracing mental effect that brought Ware's eyes open.

"See—I fix your face," said the voice of Mary, the Galician girl, in a self-congratulatory way, "now I take me your boots off." And, without

waiting for the word of consent, she ripped open the laces and drew off Ware's boots and socks. After which Sir William, watching with a curious half-interest, beheld her scoop up liberal handfuls of snow and commence to rub the bared feet from toe to ankle, as she had rubbed the face.

In the midst of this operation, a peal of bells sounded; and around the corner of the house came Jim Burns, with a fresh team hitched to the "jumper". Burns, a tough westerner, had been barely affected by the storm, except for frozen cheeks and nose, which he had rubbed out down at the stable. His feet, clad in thick felt "duffels", had escaped freezing.

"Hey-o;" he said, unconcernedly; "gittin' thawed out all right? Mary, I got to go back for Jack and the Missis—the sleigh's stuck in a drift, about two mile back along the trail. We cut the ponies loose, an' they led us home, right up to the stable door. Jack, he was a-goin' to come along too, at first, and fetch the Missis on his back—him and me would have took turns carryin' her. But she wouldn't hear of it, so Jack he told us to go on ahead. Said the ponies would take us home, all right, and I could come back in the jumper when I got warmed up. But," Jim Burns could not help a bit of western swagger, "I'm all right—I don't need no warmin' up. Rustle me a couple

more blankets, Mary. I'll finish rubbin' them feet out."

"Aa, you go on, Jeem Burns," Mary, interested in this tall, pleasant-faced man the storm had brought her, pushed Burns away; "You know you where yon blankets is. You get them yourself—see!"

"A-all right," the hired man, swinging his shoulders, stepped into the farmhouse living-room, gathered up a pair of heavy gray blankets from the rail bunk in a corner, brought the coal-oil can and refilled the lantern he was to take with him, and then lighted the lantern.

"I guess I can keep the trail all right, goin' out," he said, as he stepped outside, "the wind, she'll be behind me. Comin' home, the horses'll face it all right, they'll be that keen to get back into the stable again. Well, so-long, yous; keep a good fire on, Mary."

With this, Jim Burns tossed the blankets into the jumper, hopped in after them and, standing up in the vehicle as though it was a bob-sleigh, this conscious master of the northwest blizzard took off his dogskin cap, whirled it jovially around his head, and whooped to the horses. They broke into a trot, receding down the lee of the grove where the snow came tumbling over the tree-tops in vaporous clouds, like smoke from a

huge smoke-stack; and in a trice the night had swallowed them.

"You come in now," said Mary, finally; "wait, I help you." And Sir William Ware felt an arm, strong as the coil of a pythoness, constrict his waist and lift him bodily to his now sore and burning feet. Sensitive as they were, however, Sir William, putting away gentle Mary's supporting arm, stood his full weight on those restored feet, rose on his toes, turned them from side to side, and otherwise moved them to bring back circulation and pliancy.

"The doctor, he no cut them off now, eh?" commented Mary, glancing down at the healthily-reddened members in a satisfied way. Ware turned toward her instantly; stepped over; grasped her hand; shook it warmly.

"Thanks, so much," he said, with a shining gratitude, "and I wish there was a more expressive word I might use, Mary. We are, some of us," he eyed her thoughtfully, "so used to having these things done for us as a matter of course by those who are really our fellow-beings, that we often omit the 'thank you'—taking the often vital service rendered as our due, just because the good Samaritan happens to be a maid or valet. But here in Canada we're all fellow-citizens, aren't we?"

"I get you some supper," said Mary, "and fetch you a pair of the boss's socks."

CHAPTER XXII.

IN THE DRIFTED SLEIGH.

THE Nixon sleigh stood in the drifts, tilted end up in the attitude of a sinking boat. There were no billows to rock it, and the place where it stuck was solid enough. There was no danger of the sleigh being covered by submer-sion, either sudden or gradual; but the prairie winter tempest has another way of achieving burial of derelict craft and spent crews, when the travelling foot slows to a halt and the numbed brain yields to the coaxing of sleep.

There are beautiful things done between October and April by the northwest frost and sun—pattern on pane, transformation of twig, fashion of flake, aurora, twin “dogs” of the spectral sun-bow—but nothing more marvellous and swift than the building, over fallen body or stopped vehicle, of the white and wonderful sepulchre of the snow.

Out from the back of the sleigh as it stood, there tailed an indescribable drift, geometrically proportioned, beautiful beyond words. Fifteen full feet it extended, from the high sleigh-box wind-ward, to the low drift-surface a-lee. In shape it was like the back of a saurian—one of those ruder, hardier things generationed before the earth was tempered by the Creator to the habita-

tion of man. Within the sleigh-box another drift had formed, extending similarly from the wind-breaking frontboard along the floor to the back end. On the high seat above the central point of this latter drift, her feet buried in it, her upper body mummied in sacks and every loose thing the sleigh had held, froze and mumbled Lovina Nixon. Out alongside the bob-sleigh, a kinetic but uncolored piece of the vast and volatile snow-swirl, John Nixon stamped up and down in the trodden hollow he had made on the leeward side of the drift, thrashed his long arms about his torso with a vigorous smack of leather mitt on shoulder-blade, and at intervals paused to lean over the side of the sleigh-box and shout encouragement to the immovable and helpless Lovina, cowed and cloaked in horse-blankets and gunny-sacks.

"How's them feet, Lovina-girl?" would come the question—raised to a whoop in order to out-crow the hurricane and penetrate the hempen cocoon. After due pause, the response would come, querulous, monotoned and faint as a voice heard through a wall:

"Ain't I said it often, that you'd—be the death of me—Jack Nixon. Why-for did you—let them team go? Just to save your tony friends—that's all. O-o-oh!"

And John Nixon—though, with his own feet aching and his finger-ends tingling, he would be

tempted to retort, "How about me?"—would respond, bracingly, "Never mind, girl—there, I think I hear Jim a-comin' now. Listen!"

But the moments passed; the half-hours grew to hours; and out of the quivering white, with its perpetual hiss and whistle, its under-roar of distant wind-shaken groves, came no companionable jangle of bells. It was not until the hot bricks under Lovina's toes had lost their heat and she had commenced to cry and to labor against the creeping ache of cold by beating her feet with a dismal weak "tap-tap" against the bottom of the sleigh-box—not until stout John Nixon, aching from shoulder to waist with flailing his arms about his body, felt a cold doubt begin to rise even in the face of his confidence in hardy Jim Burns—that the shape and the sound of deliverance bulged and tinkled out through the texture of the storm-curtain, just ahead of the sleigh.

"Now, see here, you Mary," the voice was that of Lovina Nixon as, something over three-quarters of an hour later, she sat, feet in oven and tea-cup and saucer in lap, in the centre of the re-assembled family group of the Nixon farmhouse; "I don't mind you helpin' yourself to Nixon's socks, when people is in need—but why don't you give 'em something to put on over the top of them, so's they won't walk the heels through," the reference was to Ware who, after an uncon-

scious habit, developed by the usage of almost a lifetime, was pacing thoughtfully up and down the creaky floor overhead, where the spare bed was; "I got to darn them socks, not you."

"Jim," said John Nixon, as he propped a piece of pine board on the stove-pan and commenced to whittle kindlings for the morning fire, "don't forget to remind me, tomorrow, that we got to sharpen up the corks (caulks) of all them horses' shoes. I noticed yon Prince-horse kind of gruntin' as I led him into the stable, there, to-night. You ain't been loadin' them team too heavy while I been away?"

Jim Burns paused in the winding of a heavy nickel watch and glanced at his employer.

"Aw, now, Jack," he remonstrated, "don't you know no better than for to ask me a question like that? You'd think I was some green Englishman, or somethin'."

Ware, to whom this dialogue came up freely through the cracks between the warped floor-boards, smiled to himself as he sat down on the edge of the spare bed and slipped off the enormous gray socks borrowed from the wardrobe of his host.

"We do so like to be each other's critics," he murmured, with a half-sad cadence; "but I suppose it's the same, the world over. . . . If we could only get away from that, we children of this planet might win back what we lost at Bab-el."

CHAPTER XXIII.

DAISY'S HOME COMING.

“WELL, Jim,” Daisy, neatly hatted and furred, came down the steps of the passenger coach to Toddburn’s icy station platform, set down what Ware called her “kit-bag”, reached over a matter-of-fact way and, arresting the hesitating hand of Jim Burns, first shook it, and then, with a recrudescence of her old “free-actin’” self, punched him lightly in the ribs with a gloved knuckle; “how’s everything? Come in by yourself?”

“Me an’ the team,” responded Jim Burns, with an effort at levity, “three of us altogether. How’s *yourself*?”

“Oh, not too bad,” Daisy, answering in the old phrase, caught up her “kit-bag” and stepped briskly along beside her escort; “what did you bring, Jim—the jumper?”

“What did you think I was a-goin’ to bring,” retorted her former playfellow, “the high-box wagon?”

They reached the end of the station platform. Down on the snow alongside, that homely but comfortable vehicle called a “jumper”, full of warm-looking blankets, topped with the gray goatskin

robe, slid to and fro as Prince the colt, secured to the hitching-ring by his halter-rope, rocked spiritedly from foot to foot and pawed the snow up in clouds.

"Whoa, you!" directed Jim Burns, as he untied the haltershank. Daisy pushed her grip under the seat, looked at the blankets, and then looked at Burns.

"What have you got all these things for?" she said.

"Oh, I thought you'd be a soft city-bug by now," said Jim Burns, as he came around with the reins in his hand, "and would want every rug I could find. Jump in, an' we'll drive around to the Toddburn House. Dinner's on."

The sleigh, at a trot, crossed toward the main street, half-way down which was the Toddburn hotel, with its stable just beyond.

"Where's that Beatty?" said Jim Burns, as the two heads rocked together to the plunging of the "jumper".

"Beatty?" Daisy had been looking half-dreamily around her at the familiar little frame houses and black-lettered store-fronts, "Oh—him! You better ask somebody that knows, Jimmy."

"I'm going to break his neck," said Jim Burns.

"You'd be wasting your time, Jim," Daisy returned, half-absently, as the sleigh pulled up in front of the Toddburn House. "Don't be long

putting the horses away. I'll go on into the dining-room and order your dinner too. I know what you like. Turnips, isn't it?"

"Turnips!" whooped Jim Burns; "say, if we was out where nobody was lookin', I'd wash your face in the snow for that, Miss!"

"You'd try to, you mean," Daisy flung back, as she ran virilely up the steps to the hotel veranda; "hurry in, Jim."

Daisy had left her hat and furs in the "ladies' parlor" upstairs and was just coming out of the door of that apartment, when a diffident but somewhat sweet voice said, "Hello, Daisy."

Spinning about in her vigorous way, Daisy Ware looked into the mild blue eyes of a girl who had just come out of a room across the hall. In the girl's arms was a tiny baby.

"Why, Pearlle Brodie!"

"Not Pearlle Brodie now," said the fair-haired girl who had been a waitress in the Toddburn House when Mr. Frederick Beatty used to come there for his meals; "Pearlie Halliday now. Ed's buying here for the Northern Elevator Company, and we stay at the hotel."

She looked shyly down at the baby, and then added, giving the confidence of one girl to another, "Ed says the baby here will get used just the same as one of his own, and that if he ever hears of anybody saying a word to me about it,

he'll knock their heads off. We were married just a little while after you went away."

"What did Ed think about me going off with Freddy?" said Daisy, coloring up a little.

"Oh, he just said, 'Yon fellow would have to be an early riser to get ahead of Daise Nixon. She'll watch herself, an' don't you forget it.' I wish Ed thought as much of me as he does of you, Daisy."

"Well, you've got him, haven't you," said Daisy, "what more do you want, Pearlie? You know right well Ed Halliday could have had any other girl in town, if he'd wanted them. If he married you, that's a sign he likes you best."

"I thought maybe he'd just took pity on me, like," said the other girl, a little sadly, "Ed, he's so good-hearted, you see."

"Aw, go on with you," exclaimed Daisy; "no fellow's going to be 'good-hearted' enough to marry one girl, if there's another he likes better. He'd have given you a lot of talking that would have done you no good, and a lot of advice you didn't need; but he'd never have married you. Come on down to dinner. Let me carry the baby: what are you going to call him, Pearlie—or is it a him?"

"I'd like to call him 'Frederick', said Pearlie Halliday, her eyes dreamily on the infant, "but

of course I'll call him 'Ed'. There can't be any Freddie in our family now, can there."

"I should hope not," Daisy said, kissing the baby; "I guess Ed likes you better than you do him, after all, Pearlie. But never mind. You've got a *man*. That's more than you'd've had if you'd married Fred."

Jim Burns did not like it much when, returning from putting the horses away, he found a third party at the table he had expected to have with Daisy. But, upon reflecting that there could be no third party on the long ten-mile drive out to the Nixon farm, he swallowed his chagrin and approached the chair next Daisy with a sociable grin.

In the country, where faith is deep, the spirit of brotherhood strong, and respectability a thing that must be through-and-through, the dishonest man or the loose woman soon "gets to be known" and to be treated, quite regardless of fortune or social position, for what he or she is. But the person so "down" only stays down because of his (or her) own fault; for the country—unlike the city—is quick to see and ready to believe in the desire of an erring neighbor to return to clean and honest ways. When Pearlie Brodie married Ed Halliday, she shut up her critics. When popular, though somewhat shiftless, Ed Halliday married Pearlie Brodie, a prominent Toddburn grain-

grower, who had never taken any notice of Ed before, got him the job in the elevator.

"You'll be in a position o' trust, Ed," this wealthy patron had remarked; but—he slapped Ed on the shoulder—"a man that's helped that poor girl out the way you've done, deserves a show, an' he's a-goin' to get it. Honesty and straight livin's goin' to be the best policy, here in Canaday, as long as I have a vote. Go to it, now, boy—an' watch them grain checks."

Jim Burns was western-bred. Dangling his watch-guard in front of the infant—who regarded the utensil without interest and its owner somewhat surlily—he said, ignoring Daisy for the moment:

"We-ell, Pearlie. How's Ed a-comin' up? He's a middlin' good judge of steers, but I never heard of him knowin' much about grain."

"You didn't, eh," returned Pearlie Halliday, who had gone to school with Jim; "I s'pose you think you've heard of everything, Jimmy Burns. You seem to know a whole lot, for a boy that quit school before he was through the Third Reader."

"I done wrong, for to set in with such sassy company," was Jim's rather feeble retort, as the meat and potatoes arrived and put an end to conversation.

The jumper, on its bouncing but exhilarating

way out to the Nixon farm; had travelled three miles of the distance before Daisy's rapid-fire of tricks and talk gave Jim Burns a chance to put the question that lay nearest his heart:

"What did you go an' skedaddle off like that for, and now come back married, Daise? You know what I said to you, that day you was fixin' up my finger after I cut it on the hay-knife. Don't you mind of that? Eh, Daise?"—

"Of course I remember it," Daisy looked straight at her questioner, the corners of her eyes twinkling, "I was always throwing out hints, but you were too slow to take them, Jim. A person can't wait forever. I'd have been grayheaded if I'd had to wait till you married me."

"W-what!" Jim Burns pushed his "dogskin" cap back, so he could stare at her better, "what's that you're sayin' to me?"

"I don't chew my cabbage twice," Daisy retorted, dimpling with her effort to keep a straight face.

The situation was beyond Jim Burns' power of tongue. He stared at her dumbly, until his eyes commenced to water; then he throw out an arm and made the whip sing savagely but harmlessly over the backs of the team.

"Get epp, youn some of moonies, get epp!" he half yodled, "or I'll skin you alive!"

The horses obligingly, but without any manifestation of alarm, quickened their stride for perhaps ten paces. Then they looked at each other—seemed mutually to smile—and dropped easily back to their normal trotting-gait. In the interval, Daisy had slipped a piece of ice off the dashboard of the “jumper” down the back of Jim Burns’ neck.

It was a different day from that upon which John Nixon, his wife, and Ware had driven out of Toddburn. Overhead, there was neither wind nor cloud. The wonderful sky stretched blue and bright from the black and stark groves on the east to the long expanse of snow-waves that planed away treeless to westward, meeting in a rippling line the point where earth and firmament parted on their clean, splendid and vast ways.

Daisy presently ceased from play and, under the sway of a wave of recollection, leaned back and looked about her. The sundance of her spirits, that in the old days had made summer of every season, had not been able to thaw the frost of surliness about the Nixon home. Not then; but now, it seemed, things were different. Ever since that understanding which had been arrived at in the Ware library, between Sir William and John Nixon, the farmer seemed to have opened out, changed—ratchetted back, as it were, to play over again his tune of life with a merrier lilt. The

young wife had often sensed vaguely the power which proceeded from this friendly philosophy which was at the root of, and gave point and purpose to, all her husband's thoughts, words and actions; but the change in her fosterfather gave her the first striking and definite illustration of its effect.

"And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three: but the greatest of these is charity."

CHAPTER XXIV.

A WESTERN WILD MAN.

“**N**OW, what do you suppose that is?” Sir William Ware remarked, cocking his head a little as, stepping alongside John Nixon up Toddburn’s main street, he approached the hotel door. The two had come into town with a load of wheat, which had been duly hopped and weighed at the elevator. The team had been put in the livery stable, and the bell of the Toddburn House had just given intimation that dinner was “on”.

“Oh, nothin’,” replied John Nixon, although he smiled a little, “nothin’ at all, Eng—Bill.”

“Quite so,” Ware commented, glancing at something long which moved and vociferated inside the hotel window, “but don’t you think, Nixon, that it’s a bit loud for nothing at all?”

“Well,” conceded Nixon, as they went up the steps, “when I say ‘nothin’ at all’, Bill, I mean it’s something special. You ain’t got used to us Canadians yet, I see. In other words, the occasion of your rumpus is Long Tom Mewha. He’s gittin’ tanked up.”

“Yeow o wow o yippyho!” Mr. Mewha was remarking, his arm rib-crackingly about a loss

tall friend, as Nixon and Ware entered the hall of the Toddburn House, "Rip, slam, razzaberry jam! We don't care—do we, Joe. Whoa, you son of a moose, whoa!" This last as Joe coyly but vigorously endeavored to twist himself loose from the sociable arm.

"I'll turn you over my knee, an' spank you, Joe," Mr. Mewha reproved, pointing his words with a mighty slap that lifted Joe off his feet, "if you don't set still. We-e-ell—look who's with us!"

Long Tom—flinging away the unsteady Joe, who fetched up against the wall, eight feet away, with a window-rattling bang — turned to face Ware, who had just come through the hall door into the room.

"English!" he half-sung, "English, frum his scalp-lock to his moccasin-toes. Come here to me, English!"

Sir William's eye, gray, unwavering, infinitely friendly, met steadily the red-lidded glare of Long Tom Mewha—who emphasized his loud-toned invitation by rocking the upper part of his body from side to side, punctuating this movement with beckoning backward jerks of his head and crookings of a strong black-nailed forefinger.

"Come here to me," repeated Mr. Mewha, making a sound-box of his nostrils, "and do it sudden!"

He was a mighty man, in build, this Tom Mewha. Tough, long-sinewed, panther-shouldered, the seams of his buckskin coat straining under the twisting of a torso, muscle-flexed with the excitation of alcohol. He had a black moustache that swept below his chin on either side; a blunt nose skinned with frostbite; eyes aglow with virility and physical well-being; a forehead that just now was, from shaggy eyebrows to hair-roots, dotted and beaded with sweat. The incarnation of physical force; spurred to height of power by the liquor that had wakened every healthy artery to racing-pace: Long Tom could have taken any two of those who stood about him and without undue effort dashed their heads together. They all knew it, and stood back: all but Ware, the calm new-comer.

"Better give him his way, Bill," advised Nixon sotto voce, behind Ware's shoulder, "he's one bad-actor when he's pickled, if you go to cross him."

"I shan't cross him, old chap," Ware responded, a little drily, "nothing, in fact, was farther from my thoughts. How are you, Mr. Mewha?" He stepped forward, and held out a friendly hand.

"What do you mean," Mr. Mewha demanded, "by standin' in your tracks, like a bump on a log, after I holler 'come'? Do you know that I could


bust you right in two?" Ignoring Sir William's hand, the speaker inched close, scuffing his feet ominously over the creaking boards, thrusting his chin out, glaring like a stiffened and challenging beast.

"Exactly," the word came briefly, distinctly, clear-cut as a knuckle-tap on glass. "Will you shake hands."

Often, in the days that followed, John Nixon, thoughtful in his evening chair, reflected on those four words and the way Ware said them. The inflexion was smooth and even; the tone hardly more than gentle; the expression pleasant. But the effect—which Nixon and all those who stood about felt equally with the one to whom the words were addressed—was that of a mandate. Not a foolish command, proceeding from the habit of authority, without present power to exact obedience; but the serene, confident, all-potent fiat of brotherhood. Long Tom, at the moment the sentence was uttered, was in the attitude of a great animal about to spring. His face, shining with perspiration, was pushed close to Ware's; his hands, the fingers tensed and crooked, were raised to the level of the baronet's shoulders, preparatory to gripping. The great muscles were heaved up in a mound between his shoulders, giving him a stooping aspect. His eyes held shining points, like fire sparks.

But the effect of the words was instantaneous. Nixon nor none of those about knew why nor how. All they knew was that Tom Mewha relaxed his threatening attitude; straightened to his full magnificent six feet four; swung up a hand.

"Put it there," he said: this Peril of the west.



CHAPTER XXV.

WHY?

JIM BURNS thought he had never seen anything more girlishly attractive than his former playmate Daisy, as she romped over the honeycombed March drifts with Rover, the patriarchal but galvanized Nixon collie. An old wool cap of her mother's was perched on the side of her head; her hair was gathered in a careless braid behind; her skirt was of the shortest; her face had a schoolgirl color and a schoolgirl dance.

"Say, why d'n you wait for about ten years more anyway before you got married up, Daise?"

Daisy, as her chase of Rover brought her close, stopped and regarded her questioner teasingly. Rover waited, wagging from neck to tail like a young pup.

"I suppose you mean that you'd have been about ready to say something then, eh?" she remarked, putting her head on one side.

"No," said Jim Burns, a little shortly; "what I mean is, that you ought to be goin' to school instead of bein' married."

"Would you object to me being married, if I was married to you?" was Daisy's response, as she tweaked Rover's tail.

"Say, Daise," Jim Burns blurted out headlong a query he had carried around in his brain for some days, "why did you marry that old fellow? Wasn't there no young ones handy? I know you didn't marry him for his money: you ain't that kind. I can't figure the thing out nohow, Daise."

Daisy Ware's eyes, as she looked at her questioner silently for a moment, did not see him. Neither did they see the farm barn, the strawbucks in the distance, the thawing ice at the cattle-trough, the drifts reduced to liquefying ice by the spring sun. For the girl was back in a massive ugly upstairs hall, with broom and dustpan, facing the son of a pile-driving millionaire who was trying to, after the pattern of his parent, "put her where she belonged;" in her memory again, as there had been on that occasion, a certain man equal in fortune but very different otherwise, who had in spite of his apparent fifty or so years, made her a boyish and eager proposal of marriage.

"Because," Daisy, this picture out of the past in her mind, answered Jim Burns unconsciously, by what was really a sentence thought aloud, "I wanted to show some people where they got off at."

Jim Burns' legs went numb at the vigor with which she said this. His hands opened loosely, and his pitchfork slid out of them.

"Well," he gulped, presently, "you needn't have went and did a trick like that. Why couldn't you have given me a hint, Daise?"

At this, Daisy came out of her reverie and stared.

"Given you a hint?" she repeated, "wha—o-oh I see. Well, that's what you get by being slow, Mr. Man. See!"

She caught Rover's tail, and ~~vaced~~ away with him over the big drift that ran up to the top of the snow-flattened haystack. Jim Burns took off his hat and rubbed the back of his head till it tingled.

"Can't make head or tail of that'n," he said finally, replacing the weathered "dogskin" cap; "But I might ast *him*. Say—I *will* ast him! I b'en a kind of a brother to the girl, and I got a right to know, ain't I?"

The chance to ask Ware, who had gone for a stroll about the farm with Nixon, did not present itself till toward evening. Then Burns, returning with the horse from the trough, met Sir William, thoughtfully inspecting the architecture of an old log wing of the stable.

"Clever work, that dovetailing, Burns," Ware said casually; then, as he noted that Jim Burns had halted and fixed him with a glance conveying what seemed to be determination, the baronet said, briskly,

"Well, old chap? What is it?"

"I got something to say to you, sir," Jim Burns responded, setting his feet a little apart and squaring his shoulders.

"Say on," Ware invited, dropping his hands in his pockets, and regarding his catechist pleasantly.

"It's about Daise," Jim Burns went on, "I've knew her since she was a kid. We went to school together, and we was pretty good chums them days, and in fact right up to the time she skinned out with yon Beatty. I was figurin' I'd marry her some time (she claims I never said nothin', but I wouldn't have got no satisfaction anyway, if I *had* ast her, which I guess after all I didn't, but she might have knew, for I didn't try to cover it up none). Well, now she comes back married up to you. O' course, the girl's her own boss, I know that. But—if you don't like me talkin' to you this way, sir, you'll have for to lump it; I never was one to hold back anything I got to say, not for no man—there seems to me to be somethin' queer, mighty queer, about the way you an' her yips along. You go out with Jack for a walk, or for a load o' hay, or off to town; and she hurrys around with the dog or me. Yous never seem to be together, nor neither one of you to care one rip what the other's doin. And—now here's the place where maybe there's an apology

comin' to you for what I'm going to say, so I'm going to apologise first, and then go ahead—"

"Go on," said Sir William, gravely.

"I been brought up out here in the country," Jim Burns continued, a little more slowly, "and I don't know what they do in town, or over there where you come from; but out in this country, when two people are married, they're married. It don't matter whether he's old and she's young, or whether she's old and he's young. They're married, and they act married, and they stay married, or they don't get the respect of the settlement—and if they don't get that, they might as well be dead."

"Do go on," said Ware, his eyes alight. "I'm vastly interested, Burns. I am, really. What is your point?"

"The point," Daisy's schoolmate pursued, stoutly, "is just this. You sleep upstairs there, in the spare bed; and Daise, she still climbs into her old bunk downstairs, where she slept when she was a kid. Now," Jim's voice broke a little, "that suits me fine, for I'm sure I don't want to think of her as a married woman, married to somebody else. But it ain't right, and you know it ain't right. Yous two are married, and you ought to act married. First thing you know, some neighbor woman will notice it—one of the talky ones—and she'll put it around the whole district."

The speaker paused; cleared his throat; and went on:

"I know it ain't Daise's fault; for she was born in this country and she knows what's right; and whatever bargain she made, she'd stick to it. So I blame it onto you. Now, what's the matter? Ain't she good enough for you? If you didn't intend to treat her like a wife, why did you marry her? That's my point! I can't very well speak to Daise about it; so, as man to man, I put it up to you."

There were a few moments of silence after Jim Burns finished speaking. Something sincere and high in the quiet gray eyes across from him quelled his bristling earnestness.

"Dear old chap," said Sir William, dropping his hand on the other's shoulder, "first, don't think I wish any apology for what you have said. Secondly, be patient. That is all I may say in words, by way of reply to what I believe you have said in thorough sincerity: be patient, as I myself am patient. You will see that all will be well. Now—shall we speak of something else?"

CHAPTER XXVI.

A NEW SETTLER.

“WHY don’t His Nobs go home out of the slush, and come back here when it’s dry, if he wants to?” demanded, one night, Lovina Nixon of her husband, as he performed the ultimate evening ceremonial of whittling kindlings for the morning fire. “There’s no sense of him and Daise wading around here through the mud, making four more feet to track my floor up, when they’ve got a comfortable home, with a dry sidewalk to it, laying idle in town. Now, is there?”

John Nixon, his sock-feet propped on the stove-pan, pushed hard with his jack-knife against a tough shaving, and allowed the usual interval to elapse before he made response.

“You claim to see everything,” he remarked, finally, as the shaving split off and fell to the floor, “an’ I guess you do. Like most of the weemen, there ain’t much you miss. Ain’t you noticed nothing about Bill’s actions lately that might tell you why he stays around?”

Lovina came to attention, her hands at her hips.

“Why, no,” she said, “I ain’t. How could I?”

He spends most of his time out o' doors with you."

"Well," said her husband, "you can gener'ly take in things without lookin'—through the pores of your skin, like. Hasn't your sense of feelin' told you before now, that Bill's been bit by the farmin' bug?—bit hard, too!"

"What!" Lovina smiled incredulously; "why, he don't know a plow from a set of harrows. Have some sense, man."

"Don't he?" Nixon applied his knife again to the edge of the piece of pine board; "maybe he didn't when he first come out here, but there ain't much now he don't know. He's watched me blue-stonin' the seed wheat; he's had me take the fannin' mill apart to see what makes it go; and I guess I've plowed pretty near thirty acres for him, in pantomime, with the old breakin' plow, out there in the snow. No hired farmin' for Bill—he's a-goin' to do all the work himself."

"I pity his hands," Lovina Nixon observed, her knuckles at her chin reflectively. "Where's he gettin' his farm? Not going to buy us out, I suppose."

"Oh, we're fixin' that part of it," John Nixon, having finished the kindlings, folded his knife and returned it to his hip-pocket. "To keep you from gettin' any wrong notions into your head, I might say that he ain't goin' to buy us out,

however. It's Jimmy Tomlinson's place he's gettin'. We're going over to see Jimmy to-morrow."

Jimmy Tomlinson, standing in the doorway of his bachelor cabin across the road-allowance from the Nixon farm, next morning welcomed glowingly the tall man in gray and the short broad man in overalls who drove up to his door in a muddy-spoke buckboard.

"Spring-like weather, Jim," said John Nixon, quizzically, as he pulled up the bay horse in the lee of the house bluff, "why ain't you down't the granary, picklin' up your seed?"

Jimmy Tomlinson merely grinned. He was uncommunicative and small and somewhere between fifty and sixty years old. To his gray flannel shirt he had this morning buttoned the celluloid collar which was always added to his attire when receiving callers or when working in his front field, which adjoined the Toddburn road. He had a little sandy moustache and a rather delicately-tipped chin which, as a cut in its cleft attested, had just been shaven.

"Putt in y'r horse," he said, in a thin high voice like a woman's, "tie him in the far stall, Jack. Come in, sir." This last to Sir William, upon whom the eyes of Mr. Tomlinson — who wanted \$20,000, for his half-section—were fixed in timid appraisal.

Jimmy Tomlinson, who had been a country

bachelor for over half a century, now in his later but still sound and healthy years, wanted two things—to move into town, and to get married. His father had worked out in the harvest field when past ninety, and his mother had “run the house” unaided till her death at eighty-seven. Neither had ever had “a sick day”; so it was the reasonable expectation of their son, in his fifties, that he had between thirty and forty more comfortable years “above ground”. As a result of a score and a half years of thrifty farming, Jimmy Tomlinson had \$30,000 in bank. This, with the \$20,000 which he intended to ask and to get for his farm, would make \$50,000. If no young woman wanted a healthy bachelor with \$50,000—even though slightly above the usual age at which married life is commenced—then the world had changed mightily from what it used to be. Besides, there was no law against a man wearing a toupee. And if—as said a certain beauty pamphlet which had come to Jimmy’s house wrapped around a cake of toilet soap—massage and a certain kind of “cream”—could do marvels with the wrinkles of womankind, where was the reason a man could not lock the door, plug up the keyhole, pull down the window-blind, and regain youthful beauty in the same way. Surely a man’s fingers were his to use, and to look pretty is a legitimate ambition.

Jimmy had once thought of Daisy for his own; and it was therefore with a slight, but passing, tinge of envy that he now looked out of the corner of a diffident eye at her husband, who was after all no younger than himself.

Entering the house of Mr. Tomlinson, Sir William Ware found himself in a single log-walled room, of which the floor was tidily swept and the central small table covered with red oilcloth. On a shelf braced with home-sawn brackets, stood a round alarm clock, a coal-oil lamp and—their titled backs turned outward—a little pile of paper-bound books whose names suggested that they were love stories. On top of all was a department store catalogue, with the page turned back at the men's attire section. There were in the room three kitchen chairs and an old upholstered easy-chair, to the last of which Mr. Tomlinson escorted his guest.

"Jolly healthy out here, old chap," Ware remarked, as he sat down, in the chilly March-end breeze that blew in through the open door; "there must be a bit of an Old Country strain in you. Do you keep the door open all winter?"

"Pretty near all winter," said Jimmy Tomlinson, answering with the simple truth, "I'm outside most o' the time."

With this, he sat down diffidently, put his knees together, and spread his hands upon them; and,

as Sir William was in a meditative mood, no more words passed between host and guest till Nixon came in from the stable.

"Well," he said, setting his hat to the back of his head and drawing up a chair, "I s'pose we may as well get down to business—eh, boys? Jim here's the only man that has all summer on his hands. You're mighty foolish to sell out now, Jim, with wheat the price it is and the farmers just commencin' to make a little money."

"I have all the money I want," said Jimmy Tomlinson, in his thin voice."

"You've kep' your nose down to the grindstone for thirty-odd years, eh, and now you want a rest," prompted Nixon, slapping Tomlinson on the knee; "ain't that it, Jim?"

"I—I—yes, that's it," said the bachelor. "Thirty-three years," he continued—haltingly at first, but becoming fluent as he proceeded with the verbal expression of a dream that had been so often turned over in his mind that every detail of it was complete—"in storm and sunshine, neighbors, I've walked up and down between m' plow-handles and figured on the day when I could quit and take it easy and get married, like a civilized man—"

"Civilized?" put in John Nixon. "Jim, boy, the only man that keeps out of trouble is the man that has sense enough to stay single. Look at

him, Bill! Why, he could shave off his mustache, hang a schoolbag over his shoulder, shorten up his pants, and start right in goin' to school, and nobody would know him from a fifteen-year-old boy. Look at him, and then look at us, the same age! Civilized! Jimmy, you take the advice of a man that knows, and stay uncivilized. Eh, Bill?"

"Now, now, Nixon," Ware shook a finger at his father-in-law. "Go on, Tomlinson."

"——like a civilized man," Tomlinson, wrapped up in his mental picture, resumed as though he had never been interrupted; "and see a little of town life and the things a man reads about. This is a mighty big world we're in, boys, and we don't see much of it from out here. Here in this settlement, every girl's either married or got a feller——"

"I thought it was the world you wanted to see, Jim——"

"Do shut-up, Nixon. You *are* an incorrigible chap, you know. Don't mind him, Tomlinson. He really is interested, just as much as I am—that is to say, vastly. Please go on.

"——or got a feller," Jimmy Tomlinson continued, staring before him and unconsciously moving his hands on his knees with a species of animation, "and they won't look sideways at you, let alone make up to you——"

"Make up to you?" commented Nixon. "Did

you hear that, Bill—he wants them to make up to him. I don't want for to interrupt. But could you listen to that, and keep still? I can't! That's why you're still single, Jimmy—at fifty-six."

"Fifty-five past," corrected Jimmy Tomlinson, breaking the thread of his thought for the first time; then he went on, "it ain't right for a man to live all his lone, out here among the kyoots (coyotes), an' see nothin' at all of life. I was born and fetched up on a farm. My father, he married late in life—you know that, Jack—an' when I was born, my parents was both old. I was their first an' their last, an' I never had nobody to talk to—no brothers n'r sisters—so it's natural, ain't it, that I grew up kind of backward.

"Well, nobody has ever seemed to want for to talk to me, an' I ain't the kind that can push myself in; so I made up my mind, a long time ago, I'd stay in the shack here and save money; and when I got enough to pay my way, so I wouldn't have to ask no favors of nobody, nowhere, I'd sell out an' pack my grip and travel. I could have quit ten years ago or more, an' had worlds-an'-a-plenty of cash to carry me through; but I'm kind of slow to move, and I guess a feller gets more so as he gets older—not that I'm anyways old yet, you know——"

"Oh, no," said Nixon; "just beginnin' life, Jimmy—that's all."

“——and I guess I would have b'en here for another ten years maybe, Jack, if you and your friend hadn't come along. But I feel just as good now, better if anything, as I did at forty-five past, and I have considerable more money, so maybe it's just as well after all. Now,” Jimmy Tomlinson, concluding this explanatory prelude to the sale of his farm in the manner in which he had often rehearsed it to himself, swung his chair around facing Ware, and injected into his tone a bargaining briskness that cracked his voice to a squeal, “whutt's it to be. Twenty thousand, cash down, takes this place—buildin's, stock, implements, what grain's in the grennery, fowls, feed, everything: want to get it all off my hands in one sling. All that the man I sell to's got to do is to hitch up my team—his team, it will be then—and drive me and my trunk into Toddburn. But I got to have the cash, right in my hand—no notes to worry over, no fear of the place comin' back onto me when I thought I was through with it, nothin' to worry about in this wide world. Well, sir?”

“Have you a pen and ink?” said Sir William, bustling from his chair to accommodate himself to the other's mood, moving over to a seat by the table, and laying his cheque-book on the red oil-cloth.

Jimmy Tomlinson, his hands trembling with the excitement of this climactic moment of his whole

life, brought an old stone ink-bottle and a pen with a nib that sputtered like an angry cat as the baronet wrote.

An interval of quick writing; a brisk ripping sound, as perforated edges tore apart: and Jimmy Aleck Tomlinson, bachelor and recluse, held at last in his hand the small precious oblong slip which spelled emancipation from the farm life that had held the Tomlinsons of four tardy-marrying generations.

It was a final instinct of caution that made the vendor, a few moments later, as Nixon returned from the hitched buckboard for the leather mittens he had accidentally left on the window-sill, whisper hoarsely, "Is he good for it, Jack?"

"Good for it!" Nixon, drawing on the mittens, dealt Jimmy Tomlinson such a congratulatory whack on the shoulder that the latter took two involuntary steps forward; "good for it, Jimmy! Why, Bill yonder could buy up the whole settlement, with Toddburn throwed in for good measure, if he had any use for it."

"Well, I s'pose it's so, if you say it is, neighbor. He's your girl's man, and you ought to know, if anybody does. But somebody, I forget just who, was tellin' me he heard this Ware was goin' to run the farm himself, without hirin' any help. So naturally I figured, if that was so, he hadn't the money to pay a man."

“No, it ain’t that,” said John Nixon, as he turned toward the door; “it’s true that he don’t intend to hire any more men than he has to, and it’s true that he’s going to work right along with the ones he does hire. But when you say why—I don’t know. All I know is, Bill’s just a-pawin’ the air to get to a pitchfork. Ain’t that always the way, Jim?—ain’t it, now? Nobody satisfied. Them that has to buck wood, like you an’ me, don’t want to. Them that don’t have to, is fairly bawlin’ and pawin’ up the sod, to get to a saw-horse.”

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE SEWING MACHINE LOVEMAKER.

“**H**ERE’S somebody you ought to know, Daise,” remarked Lovina Nixon, coming in from feeding the calves: “Look down the road there.”

Daisy turned from her ironing and crossed to the window.

“Yes, that’s Dex,” she said, coolly, as she looked out, “I can see the sewing-machine in the back of the rig, as plain as anything. Who would that be, with him, Mother? Oh, yes, I see—it’s that Mrs. Rourke. Is she as flirty as ever?”

“Oh, she just *acts* flirty,” Lovina answered, sticking up for her old crony, “~~nothin’~~ wrong about Jen. She likes the men, an’ she’s full of the ol’ Nick. But it’s just fun, with her—that’s all.”

Presently the buggy of Dex Coleman, the agent who was responsible for district sewing machine sales, drew up in the yard. On the seat of it were two persons—a young man with a smooth face and red lips, and his hat a little to one side, and a buxom woman of about forty-five, with a color like a girl and a hand that slapped her knee as she tilted back her head and laughed. *Her* hat was

also a little on one side—pushed into that position by a playful attempt of Mr. Coleman to kiss her.

“Well, I’m sorry the drive is ended,” the latter was saying, as, having jumped out of the buggy, he reached up a chivalrous hand to assist down the healthy weight of Mrs. Jenny Rourke.

“Oh. indade,” observed that lady, her head on one side and her foot on the step. Well,” she added, coquettishly, as she stepped lightly out, executed a little jig, clicked her heels together, stood up straight, and made a face at Mr. Coleman, “I’m to be the wan that’s *not* sorry, then—is that it. You’re a divil, Dexie!”

“Your sayin’ that don’t make it so-o, sweetheart,” returned the sewing machine man, pleasantly; “kee-wick!” (This last a curious squirting sound, produced with tongue and cheek, as Mr. Coleman aimed an intimate jab at Mrs. Jenny Rourke’s ribs.)

“Lave alone what don’t concern you,” was the advice this feat elicited from his driving companion, as she wrinkled an eye-corner at him over her shoulder, and vibrated (there is no other word that exactly describes the brisk teetering walk of Mrs. Jenny Rourke) off toward the house; “you sassy brat!”

The sedate and somewhat sour-faced Lovina was grabbed and all but lifted off her feet by the embrace of her friend, as the latter breezed into

the farm kitchen. Then Mrs. Rourke turned and saw Daisy.

“Well, well, we-ell, an’ how’s the little squiress!” she roared, as she made for the girl; “come here, me darlin’, and give me the feel of your pretty face. M-m-m!” and Mrs. Rourke kissed Daisy with a munching motion of her own full, handsome and still fresh lips.

“Where iver did ye pick up your knight o’ the garter, in this country, alanna?” she exclaimed, holding Daisy at arms’-length between two virile palms; “why, in Canada they’re as scarce as teeth in a hen., Sure, I hope he’s an Old Country knight an’ not just a mushroom Canadian ‘Sir’. I love Canadians—especially young ones, whether they’re he’s or she’s—but don’t show me anny Canadian that’s let them tack a handle to his name. What’s like flannel pants an a negligee shirt to an Englishman, makes a Canadian look like a tailor’s dummy. Where is he?”

“He’s gone over with Jack to the new farm,” Lovina put in, somewhat grumblingly, “they spend all their time over there, when Jack ought to be attendin’ to his own work, if he expects to get his seedin’ done in anyways decent time this spring.”

At this, Mrs. Rourke let go of Daisy, bounced over, grabbed Lovina Nixon around the waist,

threw her into a chair, and sat down plumply on her knee."

"Aw, Jen!" her friend protested, diffident and red, but cracking a shadowy smile for the first time that afternoon; "my hands is all dishwatery. Set down here yourself, n' let me work while we talk."

"You stay where you are, an' let the work go for an hour. Then I'll let you up, an' we'll both fall to; an' when the men comes in t'l their supper, there'll not be a pin out of place," rippled Mrs. Jenny Rourke; then she turned to Daisy and waved the hand of dismissal.

"Run on an' see your Dexie that used to be," she said, lowering her voice to a mischievous cooing, "sure, we'll not tell, if your husband's the jealous-minded kind. Dex knows you're here, the divil—that's why he's waitin' outside."

Daisy, conceding a smile and a little toss of her head, went out. As she passed through the door, the Irishwoman murmured, half to herself, her voice warm with approval: "Straight as a string, the dear, an' able to take care of herself, right from the time she first knew a boy was a boy. Sure, if I didn't know that, do ye think I'd send her out with that—that what-iver-ye-want-to-call-him. He needs managin', the worst way. There's not half enough discipline and reshtRAINT in the sewing machine business, Lovina darlin'."

Mr. Dex Coleman left the wheel of his buggy, upon which he had been draped gracefully, and came to meet Daisy, extending both hands.

"Well, look who's he-ere!" he fluted, melodiously, "little one, little one! there *has* been a pain where my heart is, you kno-ow, since some lying son of a seacook told me you were married. What, oh, what could you have been thinking about. Why-ee, I ain't slept a wink, not for days—not for da-ays, Dear."

Daisy, looking at him, blushed a little. She blushed because she remembered that, not so very long ago, when the method of his approach was new to her, her heart *had* fluttered a little in response to the addresses of this late-unripened, yodling, golden-noted, social abortion. But, now that she had become habituated to men, the blush was accompanied by a smile—a smile that wrinkled her nose a little, as the eau-de-cologned Coleman floated close.

"Does the heart still beat true?" enquired Mr. Dexter Coleman, "crushing" her hands in fingers that were a workless white, except where cigarettes had stained them yellow, "does it—little one?" Studying the slight blush on Daisy's cheeks, Mr. Coleman missed those danger-lights, her eyes.

For the imp of mischief had sprung up in the

girl like a kindled flame, in which danced the two-horned and trident-ed devil of daring.

"Shall we—s-shall we go for a little drive, Dixie?" she said, making her voice low, and leaning her head for a second against the lapel of the Coleman coat.

"Shall we?" Mr. Coleman straightened his willowy six feet with a spring-like abruptness; "oh, shall we! We sure shall, Cutest. This way in, an' that way out—huh?"

So saying, and with a not unmuscular arm, the speaker "boosted" Daisy into the buggy, sprang in himself, and pointed down the Todd-burn trail.

"More room, goin' south," he observed, pulling on a pair of smart driving-gauntlets, and jerking the whip out of its holder; "hey—shake yourself, old-timer," this last to the livery horse, as he cut it stingingly around the legs with the whip. The animal started; kicked out; then set back its ears and broke into an angry trot, its head aside and the white of an eye showing.

"He don't love me a little bit," commented Mr. Coleman, complacently, his whip poised for another cut.

"Let me drive," came from Daisy, with a sharpness she could not keep out of her tone, "and give me the whip." Without waiting for compliance, she caught the reins from her companion;

then pulled the whip out of his hand and dropped it into the holster.

Mr. Coleman, his hands thus summarily freed, leaned back in pleased soliloquy, regarding Daisy's curves and color out of the corner of his eye.

"Now you're cleared for lovin'," was the mental interpretation he put on Daisy's action; "so it'll all up to you—all up to you, boy."

"This sure is the life—ain't it Sweetness," was the audible remark with which he moved closer on the seat. Daisy knew that the arm which crept along the back of the seat, behind her shoulders, was on its way to her waist; but, her nerves tingling, she let it creep.

It was a fine, breezy, spring day. The road, along the uplands, was dry; but the recently-melted, winter snow had flooded the ravines, and where the trail descended into these, it was, more often than not, necessary to make a detour around the edge of a slough. Where the road-allowance was fenced on both sides, most farmer owners had obligingly opened panels of their fences to allow a loop aside where there was an unusually miry grade. But there were a few places where the barb-wire rampart remained inhospitably closed, with the farmer's house threateningly in view on an adjoining hillock, and surreptitious use of "pliers" out of the question. Here there was

nothing for it but to drive through the mud, which sometimes, diluted to the consistency of paste, came as high as the hubs of the wheels.

"Behave, you!" said Mr. Coleman, sternly. He was addressing his own hand, which, during Daisy's contemplation of the landscape, had moved down until it now lightly touched her waist.

"I can't do nothin' with it, you see," he complained, a moment later, as the recalcitrant arm settled itself snugly about his companion; "just look at it now, Precious!"

"I see it," Daisy responded, looking straight before her; "looks kind of becoming, doesn't it, Dexie?"

"Mighty becomin', if you ask me," corroborated the arm's proprietor, warmly "I think it ought to stay right there, now I notice how it looks."

Following this remark, Mr. Coleman stole a glance at the cheek that was turned his way. The glance intoxicated him. He tightened his grip, edged close, and dropped suddenly from jest to earnestness.

"Say!" he breathed into her ear, "let's just keep on goin', little girl.

"Where?"

"Right on to town. Train comes in at six pee-ex. Little supper in the hotel here, an' then board her. What do we care?"

"Aw, but, Dexie, what will people say?"

"I don't give a whoop what they say—why should you mind? I can take a chance, if you can, Sweetheart. Come on: be a sport!"

"Aw, Dexie!"

"That's m' little girl. I knew you was game. Give us a sweet kiss now—come awn. Whass matter?"

"The wind's pulling my hat loose," said Daisy, "I'll take it off."

"That's th' idea," approved Mr. Coleman, reigning his impatience.

They were descending a hill, at the bottom of which a slough crossed the trail. Fences to right and left forbade a detour.

"I guess we'll have to drive right through it," said Daisy

"How about the hat?" demanded Mr. Coleman, who was now so close that his companion could barely move her elbow, "can't you get it off?"

"Oh," Daisy looked up innocently, "I forgot about the hat. All right—there, it's off."

She took off the hat and laid it in her lap. They had now reached the edge of the shallow slough in the valley-bottom, into which the livery horse waded, gingerly and slow.

"Maybe he wants a drink," said Daisy; "whoa, pettie! Thirsty?"

The horse halted and lowered his head to the water-level.

"Poor fellow!" Daisy commented, as he drank in great famished gulps, "don't you ever water him, Dex? Aw, quit! Aw-w—you're mean! There, now—see what you've done," and, as Coleman, red and hot-eyed, drew back from kissing her, Daisy pointed to her hat, afloat on the slough.

"That's nothin'," said Coleman, regarding the hat as it slowly floated away from the side of the buggy.

"Oh, no," said Daisy, with sarcasm, "it just means I've got to go home and get another hat, before we start on this trip you were speaking of. ~~I won't go into Toddburn bareheaded—not even for you.~~"

Coleman rose from his seat. ~~"I'll sure get it for you, right now, Sweetness,"~~ he said, "if that's how you feel about it."

"Well, you'd better hurry, for it's sailing away," Daisy advised; "no, you can't reach it over the wheel. You'll have to stand out on the step."

Mr. Dexie Coleman, who believed in doing everything with grace and ease, scorned to grip the honest buggy-top for sensible support, as he poised himself on the iron step, like Hermes, tip-toe for flight, and extended an arm out over the water. He calculated, and rightly, that he could just reach the hat and keep his balance.

But he had not reckoned with a gathering force

behind him; and perhaps there was no more surprised man in Toddburn than this cavalier of the sewing machine when, a second or two later, just as his fingers closed upon the hat, a strong push from rearward propelled him sprawlingly into the slough. The water was only three feet deep; but, as he fell horizontally, he went right under.

Mr. Coleman's astonishment at the turn events had taken was so intense that he, as one might say, reclined for a moment in the bottom of the slough, with the water roaring in his ears and choking in his throat, before he gathered his wits together sufficiently to grope to his feet. By the time he had regained a wet uprightness, sputtered the muddy water out of his mouth, and blinked his eyes till vision returned, he found that he was alone in the slough. Daisy had driven the horse out on the farther shore, and was just getting out of the buggy. Mr. Coleman, watching in a fascinated way, with too much water still in his windpipe to speak, saw his late companion loop up the horse's lines in the backband ring, knotting them so they would not fall and tangle the animal; then give the beast a smart little slap on the flank that started it off at a brisk trot down the trail.

"Whoa, there!" Mr. Coleman found breath to exclaim, in a thin aqueous squeal, as he paddled splashingly and frantically toward land. But

the horse, headed toward its evening meal of loft-dried hay and oats in the Toddburn livery stable, exchanged its trot for a canter, and kept on going.

"You'll have to go some, to catch him," said Daisy, levelly and unsmiling; "he knows when he's well off." She kept her eyes steadily on Coleman, tightening her grip on the handle of the horsewhip which she had retained.

"Ha-agh!"

This is the nearest possible phonetic representation of the sound which came from the man's throat, as he jumped at her. But Daisy was alert and strong and full of fight. She stepped back and swung the horsewhip. The sharp impact of the lash plucked the skin from the centre of Coleman's right cheek. Returning "backhanded," the whip raised a weal along the left side of his face, extending from mouth to ear. Coleman stopped, straightened, and put his hand to his cheek, down which the blood was running.

"So you were going to hit me, were you?" flashed Daisy, breathless and sparkling. "You're some man!"

There is something salutary and restorative about the rod—that corrective instrument recommended by Solomon the Wise. Perhaps it is less the sting than the shame—although one must admit that both must go together, to produce the effect.

Dexie Coleman, all the bad humor gone out of him, sat down dejectedly on a boulder. For the moment, he forgot pose,—forgot that his face was muddy and bleeding, his hair ruffled, his clothes soaked and dripping—forgot himself altogether.

"I'm a mean son of a gun, ain't I?" he said.

Daisy looked at him a moment narrowly and coldly. But there was neither flutter of eyelash nor any other indication that he was "putting it on." The girl's face softened a little.

"What are you always trying to be somebody else for, Dexie?" she said; "talking like a vaudeville actor, and trying to be a 'bad man' with the girls, and smoking yourself to death with cigarettes, and trying to 'land soft jobs' like driving around the country with sewing machines. You're just an honest farm boy—why don't you be one? Get out and do some real work, and get tanned up a little, and skin your nice white hands on a pitchfork-handle."

Dex Coleman got off the stone and stood up. He was really a very well-built young man, and his wet clothes, clinging to him like tights, showed it.

"I'm goin'," he said briefly, "no use of parley-vooin' around here."

He rammed his hands in his wet pockets and, avoiding Daisy's eye, stalked away. He forgot to lift his hat, for which Daisy's heart warmed to him. It was rude; but it showed he was ashamed

of himself. A young man shows shame by rudeness.

"Better come back and let me wash the blood off your face," Daisy called.

"Oh, to blazes with it!" came back gruffly, over Coleman's shoulder; then, after an interval of three strides' duration, "so-long—Kid."

The supper-table in the Nixon farmhouse was vacated by the time Daisy reached home. Mrs. Rourke was in the act of putting her supper in the oven to keep it warm; and Lovina Nixon was collecting the soiled dishes and piling them on the side-table for washing-up. John Nixon was deep in contemplation of the cuts in the harness and hardware section of a department store catalogue. Ware turned from the window, out of which he had been looking. A vague anxiety, new-born this evening, seemed to light the eyes he rested on Daisy as she entered.

As though he were the only person in the room, Daisy, looking neither to right nor left, came straight toward him from the door. She put her arms up, drew his face down, and kissed him on the lips.

"I want my hubby," she whispered, "my own hubby—bestest in the world!"

Ware's arms folded about her and he held her close.

Jim Burns, who had observed this tableau through the window, as he approached the house from outside, changed his mind about coming in. Jamming his hat over his eyes, he picked up a feed-pail and turned back toward the barn.

"Everything's all right now, anyway," he murmured, "whatever was the matter before. I guess likely my talking-to done him good."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE COMING OF THE MOTHER.

HOT July had passed, and the sun of August had shaded to the blandness of near-September, when Daisy Ware climbed into her own buggy, behind her own smart bronco, and driving out through the gate of her own farm, took bowlingly the ruts of the Toddburn trail on her way to meet Lady Frances Ware's train.

For half a mile, the road led past Sir William's fields, in which the wheat was now its full ripe harvest yellow. Around one of these fields, a binder hummed, and the shirt-sleeved man on the seat of it flung a kiss to Daisy from afar. That shirt-sleeved man was Sir William Ware, Baronet. The man who was stooking behind the binder also lifted his hand to his lips, though in *his* case the salute was not a kiss but a friendly hail; for the stoker was he who had been yodling, artificial, "city-bug"-imitating Dexie Coleman. He had callouses on his palms now that it would be hard to get through with a chisel, and on each arm a biceps that would burst an iron ring.

Daisy herself was changed in some indefinable way. Her mouth was softened, her eyes had be-

come forward-looking and dreamy, her color more delicate. Her attitude was not now tensed, aggressive, a-jump with schoolgirlish spirit; but gentle, relaxed, restful. One could not on this day imagine her with the horsewhip of punishment in her hand.

There were no pools on the Toddburn highway to impede this August drive. The breath of autumn was soft in the air, and the summer's work of the sun was over. The ruts of the trail were cushioned with soft dust, the uplands ripe green, the trees full-sapped and thriving, every twig deciduously ready for the going of the leaves. The prairie plants had long ago sent the last of their pollen abroad by wind and voyaging bee. There were red berries on the rose-bushes, and white on the wolf-willow. The house of the world was swept and garnished for the fall.

The thoughts of the young woman who sat, with that quiescent and settled look in her eyes, on the seat of the tranquilly-travelling buggy, moved to her beginning of life and ratchetted slowly up the years to the now; and it came to Daisy Ware, as it has come to many another who thinks more abstrusely, that consummated marriage is, and properly, the climax of womanhood. Every growing thing about her whispered it to-day. The message received definiteness and point as there blew across her lap a fragment of fertile fluff that had

in its heyday and its summer nodding-time been part of a maiden dandelion-blossom.

In the light of this flash of truth from exemplary Nature, the young wife saw in its true light the "board and lodging" marriage in which she might have continued unawakened—continued, perhaps, until she was old and blase and "set" and sterile—if it had not been for the potent something, salutarily born, both to her and to her husband, by the airs that move among the hills and groves of God. She saw why a "little chum" is not a wife.

Lady Frances had been held, partly by her years and partly by the prejudices which fixedly inhabit the old, from exploring far this northwest of her son's adoption. Among people not socially en rapport with her, she had long ago decided she was too advanced in years to commence to mingle. She had found few enough intimates in the cities of this colonial dominion; she anticipated there would be in the country no "nice people" at all.

She had at last consented to come out to the farm, less because she had been assured that now suitable and comfortable accommodation awaited her, than because her heart contained a vague hunger. When she had started on her journey, she had thought it was her son she wanted to see. But now, as she sat reflectively in the coach that—after travelling what had seemed to her an in-

terminable stretch of country—was at last approaching the place Toddburn, Lady Frances Ware discovered that the one she most looked forward to meeting was, not her son, but her young daughter-in-law.

This was not wholly because of regard for Daisy herself—although the young wife, with her frank and clean girlishness, had won the warmest possible place in the old lady's affections—but because Daisy was linked with a hope and a dream that now abode daily with the mother of the last male of the ancient lineage of Ware.

Daisy had, by letting the bronco take its own gait, occupied a little too much time on the trip to the village—a thing her alert and practical former self would never have done—and, as she rose to the crest of the last hill outside Toddburn, she saw the passenger train just leaving the station, from which she was still separated by about half a mile. This meant that Lady Frances, if she had come—which was certain, for she was always punctual—was waiting alone at the little depot. Daisy sat up straight, rousing the little bronco to its best speed with voice and driving reins.

“My dear, it's quite immaterial,” was the response of the old gentlewoman to her apology, as the two embraced—not in the little depot waiting-room, but out on the end of the platform, where Daisy had found Lady Frances, standing by her

luggage and looking about her. The old lady had on a simple black travelling dress and a light wrap, rather Victorian in pattern. Neither glasses nor any substitute were in view. Lady Frances could see "her way about" quite easily without them, and never carried anything as a concession to mode, or for pose or show.

"I have been enjoying myself immensely during the interval," she said, as the two proceeded to the sloping end of the platform, at the foot of which stood the buggy; "this is an enormous country—simply enormous, my dear. No, you needn't help me in."

Putting one gloved hand on the brace of the buggy-top, Lady Frances, from the slight eminence of the platform-end, reached handily the iron step of the buggy and raised herself halely to the cushioned seat.

"No, no, child—I should much prefer to wait till we are home—that is to say, unless you are hungry," she said, as Daisy started the pony in the direction of the Toddburn House.

"I'm not hungry, Mother. Billy said——"

"Billy?" Lady Frances made the interruption in a tone of pleasant interrogation.

"Will," Daisy substituted, with a little blush (Lady Frances, of course, could not know that she was a real wife now), "said that he thought you

would rather lunch at home, so I had a little something just before I left."

"Billy—Billy," Lady Frances, in mental enquiry, repeated the nickname, which had at first grated her a bit. Then her heart gave a great leap. She turned and looked closely at Daisy. One glance at the softened eyes, the delicate-hued and somewhat pale cheeks, the dreamy lips, the relaxed and restful lines of neck and bosom—and the old gentlewoman and mother, warmth of joy flooding all her arteries, reached out her hand, covered Daisy's with it, and held the young girl's fingers in a close and long caress.

"My darling, my darling!" she murmured, with a thrilling tenderness, "oh, we *will* have to take such care of you. Does William know?"

Daisy answered with her frank and matter-of-fact affirmative nod.

The drive home was a very quiet one. Daisy's new habit of forward-looking occupied her. Lady Frances Ware was wrapped in an ecstasy of that kind and depth which one does not want to break or to have broken by the paltry sound of the spoken word.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE BUD.

“**T**HAT high-priced doctor from the city fired me out,” said Dex Coleman, coming down to the barn, where Jim Burns sat on the oat-box, behind the stall where the newly-arrived Toddburn livery horse munched hungrily at a fresh feed of hay, “and Bill’s upstairs, so I couldn’t ast him what it is. If it’s a boy, the old lady will go crazy—that’s one thing sure. Milt Hayes says he’ll find out, as soon as he gets warmed up, and come down here and let us know.”

Milt Hayes was the Toddburn liveryman’s son, who had brought out the doctor to the Ware farm over roads crisped and snowbound by February, and had been given license to remain by the stove in the bustling and anxious house, until he “got thawed out”.

“Ain’t it queer, when you come to think of it, Dex?” remarked Jim Burns, as the other sat down beside him on the oat-box.

“Ain’t what queer, Jim?” said Dex Coleman.

“Her,” said Jim Burns, “goin’ to school with us about five years ago, an’ now—”

“It’s queer, all right,” agreed Dex Coleman.

"I wonder what she could have saw in him," pursued Jim Burns, following the groove of an old problem.

"Oh, I dunno," Dex Coleman set his hat to the back of his head and spat down between his hands in a thoughtful way, "Bill ain't a bad head, Jim, when you get to know him. I never worked for a better boss, nor for higher wages. He pays me every cent I'm worth an' a little more."

"Maybe so," said Jim Burns, "I ain't got nothin' against him personally. But—"

"But what?"

"Oh—nothin'," said Jim Burns.

"Come on, now, Jim,—tell us. What's wrong with Bill?"

"Well," Jim Burns flung out an expressive hand, "I could have had Daise myself, if he hadn't took her."

Dex Coleman tilted back his head and laughed till the barn rang. Jim Burns got up slowly off the oat-box and commenced to take off his coat.

"Come on," he said, "if you want a fight. I'll push your nose out through the back of your head, if you laugh at me that way, Coleman."

Coleman sobered, and slapped the other on the back.

"I ain't laughin' at you, boy," he said; "don't you ever think it. It was myself I was laughin' at. I wanted her too, Jim, them days. But we both

went at it the wrong way. You said nothin' at all to her, and I said too much. Bill goes about it in the right way, and he gets the girl. Bill's a gentleman."

"Well," demanded Burns, "ain't we gentlemen, too? I am, anyway, and I have a poke in the jaw for any man that says I ain't."

"That," rejoined Dex Coleman, "*is* one son of a moose of a way to prove to a man that you're a *gentleman*. The trouble with us out in this section of the country, Jim, is that, some way, we seem to have the idea in the back of our heads that a gentleman is a man who's got either money enough or nerve enough to sport around in a tailor-made suit and not do any work. That's the reason each of us is so sensitive about his claim to the title: because we think the man who says 'you're no gentleman' sees us as day-laborers and himself as our wealthy or nerry neighbor who don't have to work. Jim, this gentleman thing is inside of you—not outside. I've learned that much from workin' alongside of Bill, anyway. . . . Here comes Milt. Well, Milt, did they let you see it?"

"It ain't a 'it', boys," said Milt Hayes, "it's a him."

"Three cheers!" shouted Dex Coleman; "how did the old lady take it?"

"Oh, carried it kind of easy, in a shawl so clean-

white it pretty near blinded you," replied Milt Hayes, staring; "why, how did you suppose she'd take it? By the scruff of the neck?"

"I don't mean the baby," explained Dex Coleman, "I mean the news."

"It wasn't no news to her," responded the other vaguely, "she brung him downstairs herself, I'm tellin' you."

"Oh, go to blazes!" exclaimed Dex Coleman, jumping off the oat-box, "boys, I'm goin' up to the house. I'll get in, sir, if I have to massacre that city doctor to do it."

"Ast how Daise is," called Jim Burns after Coleman as he went out, "we don't care about whether the old lady likes the baby or lumps it."

It was not long till tall, good-looking and still somewhat "nervy" Dex Coleman came whooping back to the barn with the word, "I bunted past the doctor, fellows—never even let on I knew he was there—and spoke right up to Lady Frances herself. She says all you boys may come right up and have a look at the baby."

"I guess we *may*," said Jim Burns, as he followed the speaker out through the door; "it's Daise's baby, not hers."

"I had one look at him," commented Milt Hayes, as he brought up the rear of the procession, "but I guess I can stand another."

Lady Frances, as the three young men entered,

was sitting in the big upholstered chair in the centre of the farmhouse living-room. Her eyes were shining, and her whole figure radiated an extraordinary animation. In her lap lay something in shawls—something that waved tiny red antennæ in a futile way, and emitted a series of unclassifiable sounds.

“He sounds like a crow,” Milt Hayes said, sotto voce, to Jim Burns, “don’t he?”

“You wouldn’t know a crow from a cowbird, Hayes,” Jim Burns muttered; “talk sense, or keep still.”

The three approached on tiptoe. Lady Frances looked up and smiled.

“You may walk briskly, young men,” she said, “the child is quite wide awake, and not at all nervous, I think.”

The three came on abreast, a little sheepishly; but when they were about five feet away, Jim Burns, with an air of proprietorship; elbowed the other two aside and stepped to the front. Arriving at Lady Frances’ chair, he leaned over and took a lengthy and critical survey of the infant.

“Well, ma’am,” he said, “I been like a brother to Daise, and I’ve give Bill a talkin’-to, more than the once: so I can speak my mind plain-out about this baby. It’s pretty fair-looking, and I guess by the way it slings its hands around and hollers, it’ll live—but I don’t think it does entire

justice to Daise's looks and B's style. I certainly don't. Come on, boys: you take a peek, but don't touch it with your big clumsy hands. You first, Dex, and then Milt. Don't breathe in his face, Coleman, you galoot!

Here obviously ends the book of Daisy the Girl, but not the story of Daisy. For as Daisy—or, more briefly, “Daise”—she still lives in the Todd-burn district of Plowland. If you are ever that way along, you may call—any hour of any day, for there are no receiving days in Plowland. In asking your direction of those along the trail, do not enquire for the “estate of Sir William Ware”. Nobody would know whom you meant. Just say, “Where does Bill Ware live?”

For the ancient title has fallen into disuse, and the big house in the city has been sold, and Lady Frances does not wince when little Billie Ware, jumping up and down ecstatically at the window, shouts across to her, “Oh, Gamma, see *zem* horses wun!”

—THE END—

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